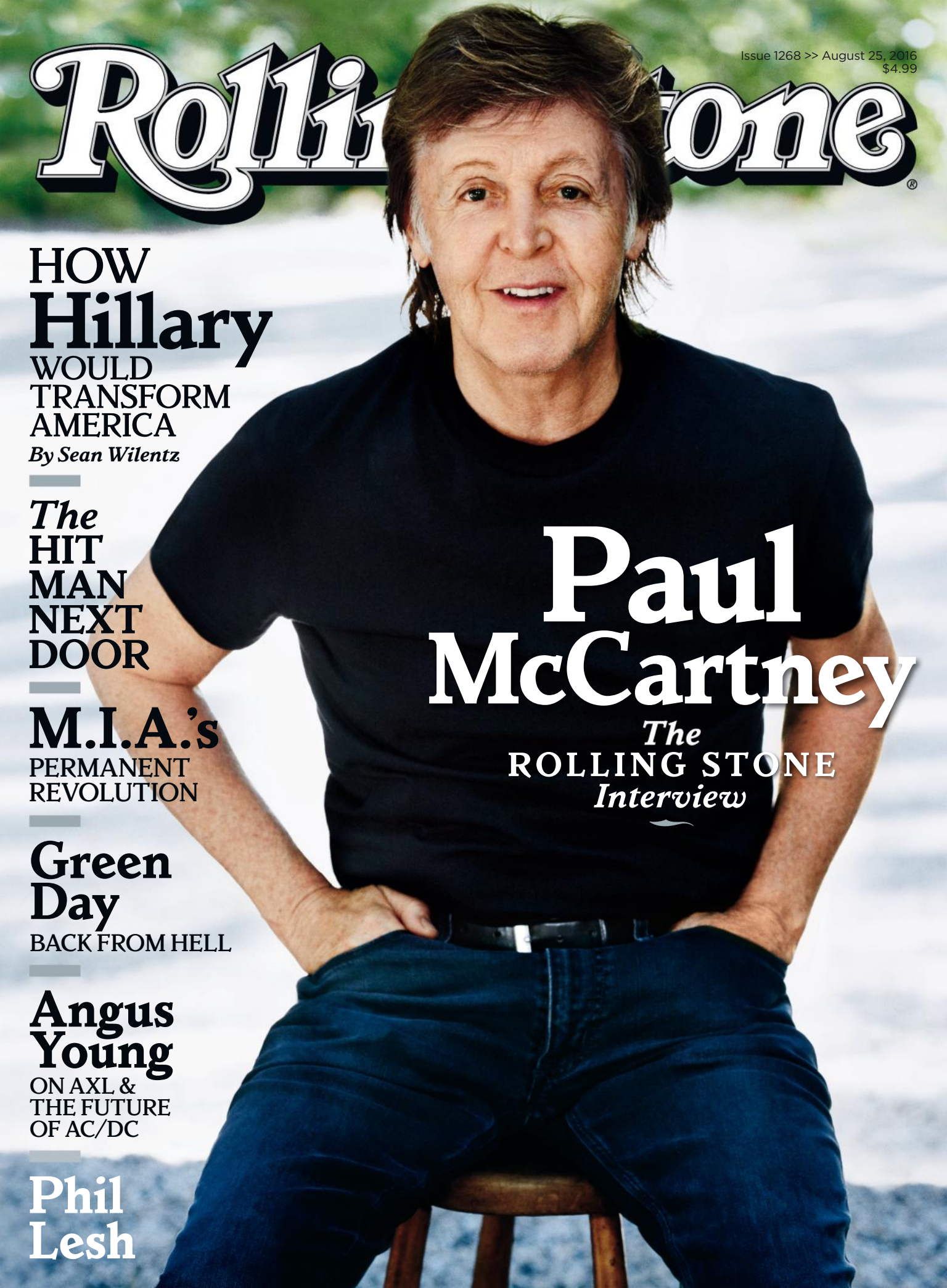


A full-page photograph of Paul McCartney serves as the background for the magazine cover. He is sitting on a wooden stool, wearing a black t-shirt and blue jeans, with his hands on his hips. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with greenery and a body of water.

Rolling Stone

Issue 1268 >> August 25, 2016
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**HOW
Hillary**
WOULD
TRANSFORM
AMERICA

By Sean Wilentz

**The
HIT
MAN
NEXT
DOOR**

M.I.A.'s
PERMANENT
REVOLUTION

**Green
Day**
BACK FROM HELL

**Angus
Young**
ON AXL &
THE FUTURE
OF AC/DC

**Phil
Lesh**

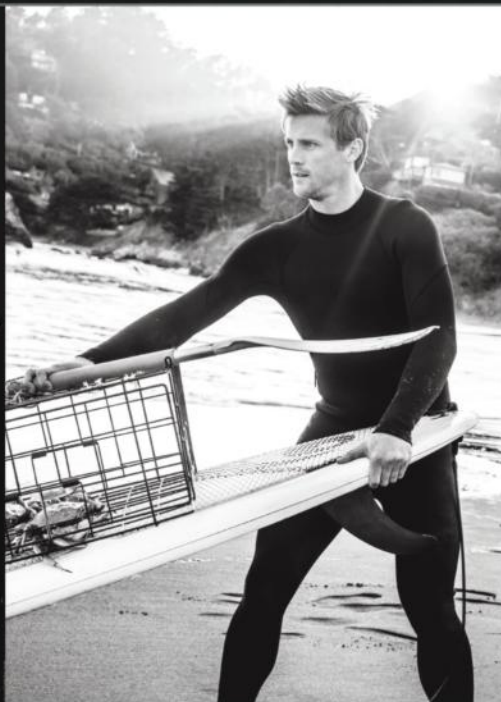
**Paul
McCartney**

The
ROLLING STONE
Interview



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RS 1268

"All the News That Fits"

FEATURES

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Pop's most fascinating radical just wants to release her new album and then retire in peace. So why are so many people mad at her?

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Green Day's New Fury

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REAL WILD CHILD
Grimes at Lollapalooza. Read more about the fest on page 26.

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TV

INSIDE 'STRANGER THINGS'

Matt and Ross Duffer, the twin brothers who wrote and directed Netflix's new hit series *Stranger Things*, get deep into the show's many Eighties references and say what it's really like to work with Winona Ryder.

1980s thrills: *Stranger Things*



Mascis

EXCLUSIVE INDIE-ROCK THROWDOWN!

Special guest interviewer Kurt Vile talks to one of his biggest influences, J Mascis, about guitar-playing, Black Sabbath and Dinosaur Jr.'s latest album, *Give a Glimpse of What Yer Not*.



CULTURE

SEX CLASS, VIRTUALLY

How a virtual-reality porn company is teaching better sex for everybody with *Virtual Sexology*, a 180-degree video experience that is created with a sex therapist.



The King in 1973

MUSIC

ELVIS' LAST RECORDINGS

Elvis Presley made his final recordings in a Graceland den later known as the Jungle Room. Read the story behind the studio and the newly reissued music he made there.

KEITH'S FIRST GUITAR HERO

In our new episode of Rolling Stone Music Now, Keith Richards talks to us about one of his idols, Elvis Presley guitarist Scotty Moore, who died in June. "That's when I wanted to go electric," says Richards. "There will never be another Scotty Moore." Plus: ROLLING STONE staffers talk about their favorite shows of the summer so far, from Radiohead to Beyoncé.

ALL THIS AND MORE AT ROLLINGSTONE.COM/PODCAST



Richards

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Correspondence

Love Letters & Advice

The Zika Threat

REALLY GREAT REPORTING on the Zika virus ["The Epidemic at Our Door," RS 1264]. The piece couldn't be more timely, as the first locally transmitted cases in the U.S. are now in Miami. Evidently, we're completely unprepared.

Eric Wasserman, via the Internet

IRONIC THAT IN JANET REITMAN's story, it's Florida Gov. Rick Scott begging the GOP-controlled Congress for federal funds to combat Zika. The virus threatens unborn children, but elected officials (a majority of whom are pro-life) are on vacation and unavailable to help.

*Francis Fitzgerald
Via the Internet*

THE ZIKA STORY RIGHTLY makes the link between global warming and the "pandemic expansion" of mosquito-borne viruses. What level of damage – to global health, to coastal property, to the world's food supply – will finally convince skeptics that the science on climate is real?

Zack Williams, via the Internet

DESPITE HAVING MORE THAN 80,000 Zika cases, Puerto Rico and its fate remain an afterthought to most people. While worrying about Zika's arrival on the mainland, why aren't we worrying about our fellow American citizens living on that island?

Ralph Goodman, via the Internet

Country Urban

FOR ALL HIS SUCCESS, I'VE long thought a particular kind of respect eluded Keith Urban ["Keith Urban's Hard Road," RS 1264]. His guitar chops always distinguished him from the Nashville stars he came of age with. That gets lost in the story of his hit songs, his recovery and *American Idol*.

Tom McMillan, via the Internet

America's Champion

Muhammad Ali was on three ROLLING STONE covers before his death on June 3rd. In "The Greatest of All Time" [RS 1264], Mikal Gilmore paid final tribute to a boxing legend.

MIKAL GILMORE HAS written a profile and eulogy worthy of the great Ali. Exquisite and heartfelt.

Diane Olson, Sandy, UT

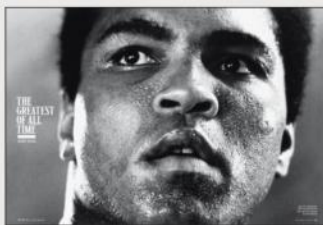
ALI'S COURAGE INSIDE and outside the ring, including his refusal to fight in the Vietnam War, reminded me how rarely a man of his game-changing gifts and principles comes along. All respect to the one true GOAT.

Elise Lee, via the Internet

THE ALI-JOE FRAZIER feud remains painful to read about. Ali got inside his rival's head, and it worked. But that goading came at a cost to his stellar reputation.

*Mick Edwards
Via the Internet*

I'D FORGOTTEN HOW REVOLUTIONARY it was for Ali to have embraced Islam in 1964. His commitment to a faith that many Americans didn't understand – and



still don't – was genuinely groundbreaking.

Helen Marks, via the Internet

HOW DIMINISHED OUR world would be if a 12-year-old Ali hadn't had his bike stolen. Great article.

*John Shalanski
Conyngham, PA*

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On the Ground at the Conventions

RS.com's coverage of the Republican and Democratic conventions generated an outpouring of responses online.

Tessa Stuart's interview with Jane Sanders, who said her husband endorsed Hillary Clinton

to stop Donald Trump, prompted one reader to write, "Bernie is not a sellout, and neither are his followers who vote for Hillary. We're realists." Another Sanders supporter rejected any notion of party loyalty: "Jane is giving Bernie voters bad advice. He only became a Democrat to run." **Matt Taibbi's**



takedown of the DNC for favoring Clinton elicited at least one yawn: "So you're saying your so-called establishment backed

the so-called establishment candidate and worked against an insurgency candidate? Get me the smelling salts." A response to a recap of Trump's acceptance speech called it "better in the original German." Another

commenter took issue with the Republican nominee's use of "We Are the Champions": "Save the Constitution if you want, ignore good taste and etiquette, but do not blaspheme Queen."

IN THE KEITH URBAN STORY, I learned more about Erik Hedegaard's issues and obsessions than I learned about Urban. Maybe the guy should become a psychoanalyst.

Dave Steinfeld, New York

Stefani Speaks Out

BRIAN HIATT DID A REALLY nice job drawing out Gwen Stefani [Q&A, RS 1264]. I'm glad she didn't wrap her new Blake Shelton romance up in a bow. It's possible, as she says, to be in love and heartbroken at the same time. That's just real life.

Katie Hernandez, via the Internet

Mudcrutch Return

TOM PETTY TAKING HIS original band on the road 40 years after it broke up speaks volumes ["Mudcrutch Finally Find Their Groove," RS 1264]. Sounds like he kind of enjoys sharing lead vocals and playing no-frills venues. I'm happy for Tom Leadon and Randall Marsh that they got a second chance to play live.

*Darryl Washington
Via the Internet*

The Mighty Quins

AMONG OTHER DETAILS IN A nice story about Tegan and Sara Quin ["Sisters Gonna Work It Out," RS 1264], I loved the one about how sweetly they pushed back against being labeled a "Canadian lesbian duo." They are that, of course, but they're also pop's very best hope.

*Elisabeth McDermott
Via the Internet*

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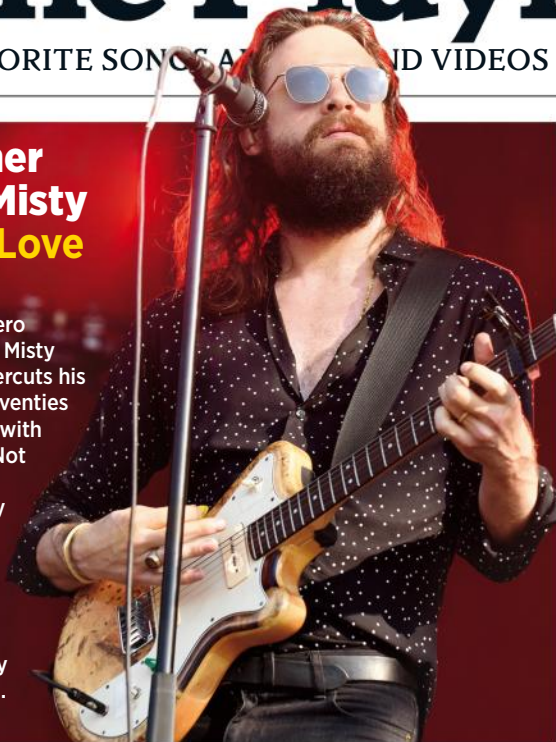


The Playlist

OUR FAVORITE SONGS AND VIDEOS RIGHT NOW

1. Father John Misty "Real Love Baby"

Indie-folk hero Father John Misty usually undercuts his sensitive-Seventies tunelessness with dark irony. Not this time. The achingly lovely "Real Love Baby" might be his prettiest song, and it's definitely his sweetest.



2. Green Day "Bang Bang"

Green Day's first studio album in four long years is out in October, and its first single is a harrowing punk rager, sung from the perspective of a mass shooter drunk on twisted fame. They've never channeled American angst so terrifyingly.

3. Noname "Sunny Duet"

Chicago rapper-poet and Chance the Rapper pal Noname kicks some lithe, fluttery R&B with a summer-stoop vibe. It's like vintage Erykah Badu at her most optimistically chill.

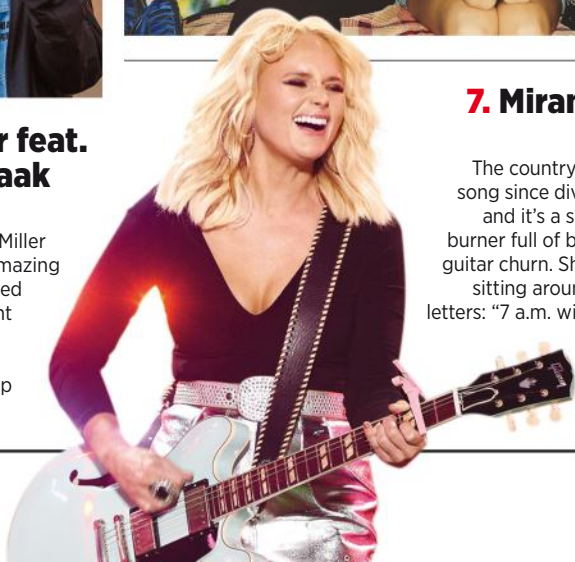
4. Radiohead "The National Anthem" (live)

A *Kid A* classic thrown down on the first night of their U.S. tour. As the crowd sang, "Everyone has got the fear," the Trump-era dread felt explosive.



5. Mac Miller feat. Anderson Paak "Dang"

Confessional rapper Miller serenades his own amazing skill at getting dumped by women on a bright dance jam with L.A. soul visionary Paak that turns relationship misery into a party.



6. Warpaint "New Song"

The moody L.A. rockers have a new album influenced by Outkast and Björk; the dubby grooves and sinewy guitars here evoke a predatory glide through the Southern California night.



7. Miranda Lambert "Vice"

The country queen drops her first song since divorcing Blake Shelton, and it's a smoldering heartbreak burner full of bleary synths and dark guitar churn. She hasn't exactly been sitting around reading Blake's old letters: "7 a.m. with shoes in my hand," she sings, making the walk of shame feel like an act of steel-belted resilience.

MY LIST



Aaron Neville

Great Vocal Performances

The R&B icon, who celebrated his 75th birthday in January and just released the new LP *Apache*, is in the middle of a U.S. tour.

Nat "King" Cole "Mona Lisa"

I used to sneak my way into movie theaters singing this song. Whoever was working the door would just let me in for free after hearing it.

Sam Cooke "A Change Is Gonna Come"

From the opening notes on, this song just captures your heart and soul. He was killed before it even came out.

Marvin Gaye "What's Going On"

If it came out now, this song would still be right on time. He's singing about picket lines and police brutality.

Linda Ronstadt "Cry Like a Rainstorm"

I'll be on an airplane trip and put this song on. It just soothes me. She has one of the greatest voices of all time.

Beyoncé "At Last"

Her records don't always do her justice, but she can sing. Etta James was so natural with this, and so was Beyoncé. We've never met, but I'd like to sing with her someday.

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Rock & Roll

Green Day's New Fury

The band dives into the violence and chaos of America 2016 on a stripped-down LP

BY ANDY GREENE

TWO YEARS AGO, BILLIE JOE ARMSTRONG was driving into Manhattan when he came across a throng of protesters. Outraged by a grand jury's decision not to indict a Ferguson, Missouri, police officer for the killing of Michael Brown, they filled the streets and backed up traffic for [Cont. on 14]

Armstrong in
Cleveland, 2015

KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES

GREEN DAY

[Cont. from 13] miles. Armstrong was moved. "I got out of my car and marched with the people," he says. "It was a trip to see people rebel against the old order."

The experience inspired the title track of Green Day's new album, *Revolution Radio* (due October 7th), a collection of songs about the chaotic state of America in 2016. It's not a political concept album like *American Idiot* – there are also more-personal songs like "Ordinary World," a sweet ballad that ends the album. But most songs touch on pressing social issues: "Still Breathing" is a scorching track, according to Armstrong, "goes from the life of a junkie to the life of a gambler to the life of a single mother and a soldier and how we're all kinda intertwined." The most incendiary song is lead single "Bang Bang," written from the perspective of a mass shooter. "It was twisted to get in the brain of someone like that," Armstrong says. "I still don't know why anyone would ever do something so horrific, but I wanted to reflect the culture a little bit too without sounding pretentious."

Revolution Radio is Green Day's first album since Armstrong went to rehab in 2012 for prescription-pill addiction, which forced the band to postpone dozens of tour dates in the wake of its trio of 2012 albums, *iUno!*, *iDos!* and *iTré!* Armstrong recovered, but the band was soon sidetracked by more adversity. In 2014, bassist Mike Dirnt's wife, Brittney, was diagnosed with breast cancer. Not long after, touring guitarist Jason White found out he had tonsil cancer. Talk of a follow-up to *iUno!*, *iDos!* and *iTré!* stopped. "These people are family members, as far as I'm concerned," says Armstrong. "I wouldn't have the audacity to be creative during something like that."

Thankfully, by late 2015, both White and Brittney Dirnt were in remission, and Green Day began work on a new LP at their studio in Oakland, producing themselves for the first time since 2000's *Warning*. "If I was gonna do it again, I'd make [*iUno!*, *iDos!* and *iTré!*] more raw and off the cuff," Armstrong says. "We were a writing machine that kept going to where we were forcing material. This time was the opposite." Now, the band can't wait to bring *Revolution Radio* to arenas and stadiums all over the globe. "I feel better than I have in my entire life," says Armstrong. "I'm so grateful for having this band – my friends are doing great and I love hanging out with them." 

Grunge's Lost Supergroup Returns

Chris Cornell and members of Pearl Jam join up for Temple of the Dog's first-ever tour, 25 years later

WHEN CHRIS CORNELL AND three future members of Pearl Jam came together in 1990 to record Temple of the Dog's one and only album, they never could have imagined playing the songs in arenas a quarter-century later – it was merely a one-off tribute LP in honor of a friend, Andy Wood of the Seattle band Mother Love Bone, who had just died of a heroin overdose. Despite producing an MTV hit, "Hunger Strike," the album remained a grunge footnote. So, last year, when the bandmates began talking about reuniting for their first-ever tour, they weren't sure how it would be received. "We were anxious about what size venues we could play," says bassist Jeff Ament. "We've never toured. We're essentially a baby band." Temple of the Dog decided to hit just five cities on the tour, which kicks off in November. But when tickets went on sale last month, the band was shocked to find out how hungry fans were for the reunion:

All the shows sold out, most within minutes. "We're superexcited," says Ament. "We can finally road-test these songs and see what they become."

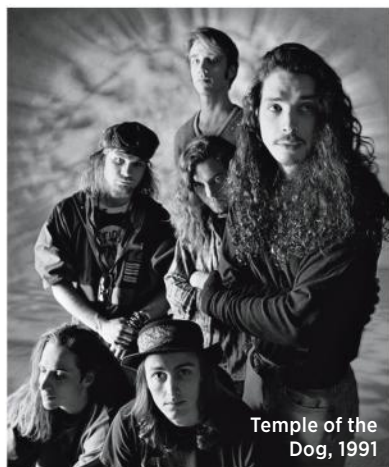
Those songs were born out of grief. Wood was Cornell's roommate and played in Mother Love Bone alongside Ament and guitarist Stone Gossard. Just after Wood's death, Cornell began writing songs in his honor, and brought in Soundgarden drummer Matt Cameron to flesh out the tunes along with Ament, Gossard and guitarist Mike McCready, Gossard's high school friend. They called the new group Temple of the Dog, after a line in a song Wood wrote.

One day, a quiet gas-station attendant named Eddie Vedder showed up at the

band's rehearsal space and sat in the corner. He was in town to audition for a new band that Ament, Gossard and McCready were assembling. The group ran through a tune called "Hunger Strike," which Cornell was writing about his unease over the growing fame that Soundgarden had brought him. Unable to come up with a second verse, he invited the kid to give it a shot. "Eddie shyly

walked up to the mic and started singing the low 'going hungry' part," says Cornell. "And I started singing the high one. The song just came together in my brain."

Temple of the Dog stiffed on release in 1991, though it picked up steam after Pearl Jam fans discovered it and MTV put the "Hunger Strike" video into heavy rotation. But by then the members were busy with their respective bands. Temple of the Dog played an extended set at Pearl Jam's 20th-anniversary show in 2011, and talks of a reunion became serious several years later, when the



"We've never toured. We're essentially a baby band," says bassist Jeff Ament. "We can finally road-test these songs."

band's label reacquired its master tapes after a legal battle. Cornell put together a box set (due September 30th), featuring rarities and a remastered version of the LP.

As of now, nobody seems to know what Temple of the Dog will play, beyond the songs on the album. "I'm guessing we're also going to play some covers and Mother Love Bone songs," says McCready. Vedder isn't slated to appear at any of the shows. "I would love it if he guested at some point," says McCready. "But that's kind of up to him." No matter what happens, every night of the tour will be a celebration of Wood's legacy. "Andy was a rock star patiently waiting for the rest of the world to figure it out," says Cornell. "And he's become legendary." ANDY GREENE

Sharon Jones Won't Stop

As she faces a devastating diagnosis, the singer is working harder than ever – and letting go of old grudges

BY JASON NEWMAN

ON WEEKDAYS AROUND LUNCH-time, you can sometimes find Sharon Jones at the Black Cat Cafe and Bakery in Sharon Springs, New York, a small town about an hour west of Albany. On this sleepy Tuesday, she greets a handful of customers by name with hugs, before ordering half of a Cuban sandwich and a glass of water with honey. Then the alarm on her phone sounds off. “Medicine time,” she says, opening an app that keeps track of the more than nine medications she takes around the clock, including oxycodone, tizanidine and fentanyl. “Without these,” she says, “I would be doubled over in pain.”

Jones first arrived in Sharon Springs in 2013, at what should have been a triumphant moment. After decades in obscurity – in which she worked security at a bank and as a prison guard at Rikers Island – she had achieved the near-impossible, reaching stardom after 40, as the dynamic frontwoman of the Dap-Kings. The band released a series of successful soul and funk LPs on Brooklyn's Daptone Records beginning in 2002 (Amy Winehouse used the Dap-Kings as her band on *Back to Black*), and lit up festivals channeling the fiery soul revues of Otis Redding and James Brown.

Jones had just finished recording her Grammy-nominated LP, *Give the People What They Want*, when she checked into a Georgia hospital, complaining of fatigue, itchiness and rapid weight loss. She had stage-two pancreatic cancer. “I looked at my sister and said, ‘I got cancer,’ and just started crying,” she says. “All kinds of thoughts went through my head, because I figured that I was going to die.” She traveled to New York for intensive surgery before coming to Sharon Springs to stay with a friend, and received chemotherapy treatment in nearby Cooperstown.

Jones' story is told in the new documentary *Miss Sharon Jones!*, directed by Barbara Kopple (who also directed 2006's *Shut Up and Sing*, about the Dixie Chicks).

The film covers Jones' difficult past, including her Rikers days (“I had to put a mean face on”), and decades of major-label rejection. “I wasn't what they was looking for,” she says. “They just looked at me and didn't like what they saw: a short, black woman.” Jones was at first hesitant about

Thanksgiving when her band cancels dinner on her.

Miss Sharon Jones! premiered to rave reviews at the Toronto International Film Festival last September. But the celebration was short-lived. At the premiere, she announced that after nine months of re-

mission, her cancer had returned full force. “It's bad,” she says. It has now reached stage four, with tumors on her lung, liver and lymph nodes – a prognosis that, as her doctor says in the film, is nearly impossible to cure. Her voice has lost some power, and her weight has dropped drastically, to 125. “That first week, I just laid in bed thinking, ‘Why?’ But it's God's plan. That's the mode I'm in right now.”

Instead of retiring, Jones has decided to work nonstop. She's almost finished her next album with the Dap-Kings, and is already thinking about the one after that, a possible return to the gospel music she grew up singing. She's playing several European dates this summer, and a U.S. tour with Hall and Oates will take her through September. “I'm glad I don't have a relationship,” she says. “Then I'd be worried about that person. I have my fans. They got me into living without a relationship.”

Since the cancer returned, Jones has noticed that she is

more forgiving than she used to be. Recently, an ex sent her a Facebook message. “I called him and didn't bring up any old feelings. I don't have time for that hatred. That's a whole changed person.” Jones lights up when conversation turns to a recent homecoming show at Brooklyn's Prospect Park. The crowd was thin due to heavy rain, but she brought the house down with a cover of Gladys Knight's ballad “Giving Up” and a heavy dance breakdown. Performances like that, she confesses, take days to recover from. “I had so much energy,” she says. “These next ones, I can't go crazy like that. They always say, ‘Pull it back, Sharon! Pull it back.’ But it felt good. When you're up there, you forget about everything. There is no cancer.”

DAP-QUEEN

Jones in Brooklyn in June. “When I walk onstage, the pain is gone,” she says.



“I don't have time for hatred,” says Jones of life since her diagnosis. “That's a changed person.”

documenting her illness on film – “I didn't want it to be fake and phony, like those Kardashian girls,” she says. But she relented, and insisted Kopple be there for every harrowing moment, beginning with the day she shaved her head. In one powerful scene, Jones discusses the possibility of promoting her next album as a posthumous release. In another, she has a lonely



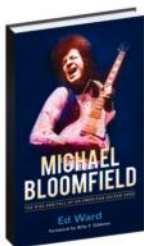
Bloomfield in the studio

Dylan's Guitar Hero

Mike Bloomfield grew up on blues and changed rock history, but ended up with no direction home

MICHAEL BLOOMFIELD'S LAST major public performance almost didn't happen. According to Ed Ward's pioneering biography, *Michael Bloomfield: The Rise and Fall of an American Guitar Hero*, the Chicago-born blues guitarist was a decade past his late-Sixties fame, living in a drug-and-TV haze outside San Francisco, when his former employer Bob Dylan turned up at his home in November 1980. Dylan wanted Bloomfield to sit in during the singer's local shows that month. Bloomfield's response: "Oh, I don't know. I'm not playing much these days." But Bloomfield showed up one night, in a leather jacket and slippers, and unleashed the same searing-treble guitar he contributed to Dylan's 1965 single "Like a Rolling Stone." Three months later, he died of an overdose. He was 37.

Bloomfield was rock's first modern guitar hero, a ferociously gifted improviser whose incandescent playing in the mid-Sixties with Dylan and the Paul Butterfield Blues Band transformed the future of the blues he loved, paving the way forward for peers and fans such as Eric Clapton. But Bloomfield repeatedly turned away from that renown and the commercial rewards that came with it. After a five-year run of masterful recordings, in-



cluding *Super Session*, the 1968 jamming classic on which he was joined by Al Kooper and Stephen Stills, among others, Bloomfield spent the Seventies veering between halfhearted comebacks and career-suicide seclusion, battling chronic insomnia with drug use and playing most of his gigs far from the limelight.

Propelled by eyewitness testimony from those closest to Bloomfield and his music, Ward's account, first published in 1983 and now revised and expanded, is a riveting tale of a restless spirit – born to privilege, in the Jewish faith – who reinvented himself through the blues' fire and poetry, but then struggled to reconcile his purist devotion with a success that his idols never enjoyed.

The book also doubles as a locomotive primer through the scenes and adventures that formed Bloomfield as an artist and legend: Chicago's South Side in the Fifties and Sixties; Dylan's landmark 1965 set at the Newport Folk Festival; psychedelic San Francisco. A key addition to this edition is the full text of Bloomfield's exuberant, opinionated 1968 interview with *ROLLING STONE* founder-editor Jann S. Wenner. There is also a thorough discography – the real canon of reasons why Bloomfield remains an American hero.

DAVID FRICKE

The Lawyer Who Kept John and Yoko in America

In early 1972, a 39-year-old attorney named Leon Wildes told his wife about two high-profile clients he'd just met who were facing deportation. "Let's see," he said when asked for their names. "I think it was Jack Lemmon and

Yoko Moto." His wife stared incredulously: "Do you mean John Lennon and Yoko Ono?"



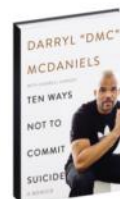
Wildes may have known nothing about pop music, but he was an expert on immigration cases, and he'd just stumbled into one

of the biggest ever. President Nixon was looking for an excuse to kick the most famous war protester out of the U.S., and Lennon's previous drug arrest made that easier. In his new book, *John Lennon vs. the USA*, Wildes tells the story of the four-year battle to secure permanent residence for Lennon. He fills the gaps left by Lennon biographers, like the parade of witnesses at the deportation trial that included Geraldo Rivera and silent-film actress Gloria Swanson. Ultimately, Wildes was so successful that he set new legal precedent. "Thanks to [Lennon's] willingness to fight..." he writes, "we managed to discover and helped create a remedy for impossible cases."

ANDY GREENE

Inside the Darkest Days of a Pioneering Rapper

By 2003, two decades after he changed hip-hop forever with Run-DMC, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels was desperate. He was battling alcoholism, near-crippling depression (fueled in part by learning, at 36, that he was adopted) and a vocal-cord disorder. Worst of all,



bandmate Jam Master Jay had just been murdered. "I contemplated killing myself almost daily," McDaniels writes in his candid new memoir, *Ten Ways Not to Commit Suicide*. Thankfully, McDaniels recovered after a suc-

cessful stint in rehab. But just as gripping as his struggle is the story of the internal politics of Run-DMC. According to McDaniels, Joseph "Run" Simmons (whose brother Russell managed the group) treated DMC like an employee. "I felt like I was isolated in an artistic jail," McDaniels writes. It's a rare peek behind the curtain at a group that made an indelible mark, then faded away.

A.G.

ELLIOTT LANDY/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES



haveKINDLE willTRAVEL

📍 MEXICO CITY, MEXICO 📖 P. KALANITHI, *WHEN BREATH BECOMES AIR* @AMAZONKINDLE



amazon

Todd Phillips' Chaos Theory

The director of 'The Hangover' and 'War Dogs' hustled his way to Hollywood gold, but can he survive fatherhood and middle age?

BY ERIK HEDEGAARD

MY WHOLE LIFE, EVEN NOW, I'm attracted to mayhem," Todd Phillips is saying, feet resting on a spotless coffee table inside his spotless office on the Warner Bros. film-studio lot in Burbank, him having turned this lifelong attraction into so much money you can't believe it.

Take the three *Hangover* movies, from 2009 to 2013, all of which Phillips directed and two of which he co-wrote. Altogether, they've raked in \$1.4 billion, with lunacy galore, chain-smoking monkeys, unexpected face tattoos, roofie-puffed marshmallows and so forth, ad nauseam. Crazy stuff, none of which would have happened had Phillips not allowed his \$8 million paycheck for the first installment to be cut to exactly \$0.00 ("Yeah, zero dollars," he says) to get it made at a price the studio would approve. He'd get a percentage of the movie's take instead. It was a gamble for him. It could have led to personal financial mayhem. "I mean, there are a lot of great movies that don't make a dollar," he says, "and I'm not saying *The Hangover* is great, but, yes, it was a big bet." A big bet that paid off, too: *The Hangover* became the then-biggest R-rated comedy of all time, and he wound up many tens of millions of dollars richer because of it.

And he looks it, too. At the age of 45, he could pass for 30. He's thin, no pot to his belly, curly-haired, stubble-cheeked, with lively, sparkly eyes and a cast to his face of perpetual amusement no matter what, which can be a little unsettling.

Let's say you bring up his short-lived teenage career as a shoplifter for hire, now 30 years in the past. He removes his feet from the table, leans forward, takes a drag on his e-cigarette and says, "It was a crew of three, and we called ourselves Cheap

John's. We would steal anything. Kids at school would put an order in on Friday, and on Monday they'd get it for 50 percent off retail. It was mostly CDs, comic books and then special orders like a Casio keyboard. I'm not proud of it, and I hope you don't mention it." He says the last six words with

by Guy Lawson. It's got lots of laughs, lots of bullets and lots of bad decisions leading to even worse decisions leading to total mayhem, which is what drives his movies – and has also led to certain assumptions about the kind of guy Phillips must be.

"People have this idea of me, because

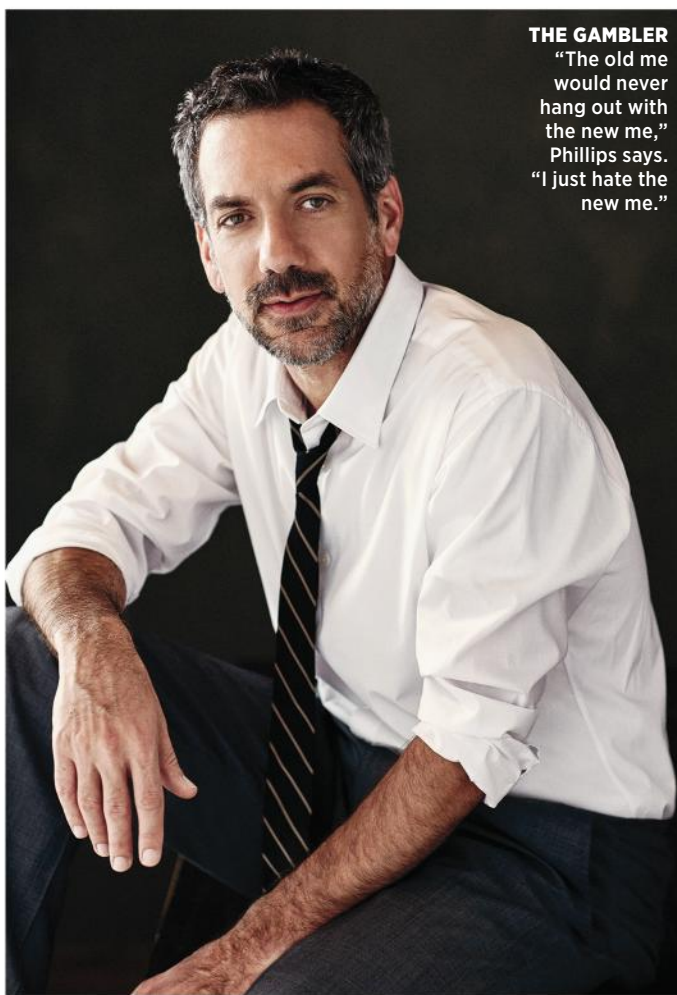
of the movies I make, like, 'Oh, he's some bro, he's like a frat boy.'" He shakes his head. "The truth is the opposite. I didn't have a lot of male friends growing up. My parents divorced when I was eight. I was raised by my mom and sisters. I never played sports in my life. The first time I held a football, I was 26 years old. I couldn't believe how hard it was."

Right then, he sticks his arms out. "Feel my hands," he says. They're soft as a wet chamois and perfectly, astoundingly smooth, like they've never seen a minute's worth of physical labor. But it isn't the smoothness of his hands that's really so astounding. It's the fact that he proffered them for inspection at all and allowed them to be lingered over. Seriously. What kind of guy does that?

FOR ONE THING, HE can be a fun, reckless guy who says fun, reckless stuff like, "Trump is a fucking shit show, but I kind of love him. At first, I was like, 'Fuck it, I'm all in with Trump because I like comedy more than I like America,' but it's gotten out of hand, so I can't support anything he

fucking stands for. But I do kind of like the goof of it all. He has made it possible you don't have to be in the political system to run for office and have a shot – someone brilliant like Elon Musk could do it. That's a positive effect of Trump. The negative is, the end of the world."

That sort of skewed-cheerful nihilism is a theme he first explored more deeply in *The Hangover Part III*, which begins



THE GAMBLER
"The old me would never hang out with the new me," Phillips says. "I just hate the new me."

especially dark emphasis, and yet he's half-smiling the entire time.

His latest movie is *War Dogs*. It's about two real-life Miami stoner types, played by Jonah Hill and Miles Teller, who get in near-death trouble after scheming their way into the arms-dealing racket for the U.S. government during its chaotic involvement in Afghanistan circa 2007, and is based on a 2011 *ROLLING STONE* story

with death. He took hits for it, from critics and audiences: "Look, I have a darkness in me, so in that one I embraced the darkness more than the comedy, which I don't think people really wanted, and I get it. But find me another comedy that did \$350 million worldwide. *Ghostbusters* would be very happy if they did what *Hangover III* did."

The only failure he'll readily admit to is 2006's *School for Scoundrels*, starring Billy Bob Thornton and Jon Heder, with Miramax chief Bob Weinstein co-producing. "I'm not blaming Bob, who is a good friend of mine," says Phillips, "but it was supposed to be R-rated and he said he'd only make it if it was PG-13. I go, 'Bob, I don't do that. I don't speak in PG-13. I'm an R-rated human being.' He goes, 'It's gotta be PG-13.' So that's what we did, and it hurt the movie. After that, I said, 'Let me do a movie with zero compromise. I mean, fuck it, man, just do your own thing.' And then I did *The Hangover*."

These days, all he does is pretty much his own thing. He plays cards every Wednesday night with a group of "degenerate poker players" he met when he first came to L.A., at age 34, and says, "I've been a gambler my whole life." Of his poker playing, his friend and producing partner Bradley Cooper says, "Put cards in the man's hands and he becomes a completely different person who is just scary, thrilling and hilarious. He can't help himself." Perhaps to calm himself, he drinks two glasses of wine a night but more likely three and really likes his pot and his mushrooms, blissing out most often in the company of his longtime French girlfriend, Alexandra Kravetz, with whom he has a two-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Juliet – who, in fact, is the only one to have messed around with his life.

He used to start writing a movie around 11 p.m., fueling his progress with weed, stopping toward dawn, waking up in the early afternoon, drinking lots of coffee and doing it all again. No longer. "That was the old me," he says. "Now I get up with the kid. Having a kid really changed me. I'm pretty happy. I was darker when I was younger. But I loved living a late life, and I can't do that now, and I fucking hate it. And I fucking hate kids. I've always hated the idea of kids. I will never have another kid. Anybody that I know that doesn't have kids, I tell them to not have kids. The old me would never hang out with the new me. I just hate the new me."

It's quite a rant and hard to tell how serious he is, especially given his constant half-smile.

So, then, has he had a vasectomy?

"No. We just don't fuck anymore. I'm so against kids. Now I'm against fucking. That's how much I don't want kids."

As a kid himself, when he and his buddies would get caught shoplifting, which

was often "because that's just the nature of the business... dumb suburban kid, white-boy mischief," his mom would look at him and say, perhaps jokingly, "I think you were just born bad." This was in the Long Island hamlet of Huntington. In high school, he liked taking pictures, especially of his juvenile-delinquent pals doing things like smoking dope, commandeering golf carts and spray-painting graffiti, and ended up assembling them into a portfolio, which he submitted as part of his 1989 application to New York University film school. Got in with a full financial-aid package but was no beret-wearing, high-minded cineaste aesthete. Instead, he set off to film a raucous documentary about GG Allin, the apocalyptic punk



THE PROVOCATEUR

Phillips directs Jonah Hill and Miles Teller (top) for *War Dogs*, based on a ROLLING STONE story. Above: Phillips' directing debut was a '91 documentary about punk lunatic GG Allin.

rocker who liked to smear feces on himself during performances, spent lots of time in jail, counted serial killer John Wayne Gacy among his friends. To help fund the film, Phillips wrote to Gacy in prison and asked him to make a poster. Gacy said he would but only if Phillips sent him a racy self-portrait photograph, which Phillips did (and today will only say that it was suitably "hawkish"). Whatever it took, he did it. The movie cost \$14,000 and earned \$1 million, a huge amount for a one-man self-distributed flick.

Next, he finagled an internship in HBO's documentary division, where he wound up making a film about out-of-con-

trol frat boys called *Frat House*. It won the 1998 Grand Jury Prize at Sundance, where he first met director Ivan Reitman, who would later executive-produce Phillips' first two Hollywood movies, and become his mentor. *Frat House* never made it onto the air, however. Seems HBO found out that Phillips and co-director Andrew Gurland maybe staged some scenes and threw parties to get the guys drunk enough to sign the necessary releases, which Phillips now admits wasn't totally kosher. "Acquiring those releases in a fucked-up way was a fucked-up thing to do," he says. "That was awful shit."

After *Frat House*, he moved to L.A. and started on his first big hit, the delightfully raunchy *Road Trip*, with the help of his new friend Reitman. "I had a good instinct about him," says Reitman. "I said to him, 'Your observations are both prescient and cruel enough to be funny.'" Three years later, *Old School* followed, and Phillips was on his way.

"I was definitely a hustler, always," Phillips says. "The shoplifting was a business, but it was a hustle too. And it's not about the money. Rich kids have hustle in them too. Like when I read the ROLLING STONE article that became *War Dogs*, I was like, 'Ah, this kid Efraim, he's got fucking moxie.' To me, the movie is just, 'Look at these two awesome guys, what they were able to do.' Honestly. If I was 20 years old in Miami and I found that loophole, I feel like I would have been a great partner for Efraim."

The way Phillips talks, he makes it seem like his hustling days are all in the past tense, long gone and never to be revisited. Or maybe he's just gotten better at it. At one point, apropos of nothing, really, he has a funny thought about offering strangers \$500 for five minutes of complete access to their cellphone. "Yeah," he says, getting all bubbly, perky. "Like, we should do that as, like, a game show on the street. You go up, especially to beautiful girls, and be like, '\$500, and I get whatever I want, pictures, texts, whatever.' That'd be fun." And on he goes, spinning out this idea, sucking you into his orbit right from the start with his use of the collaborative word "we," as if the two of you are soon going to become partners in some grand venture. It makes everything seem so intimate, inviting and warm. It's great stuff. Plus, it gives you a little feeling for how he's managed to come so far from his early days as a juvenile delinquent. Because it is a hustler's move, and very subtle, soft even, just like his hands.

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Mitski's American Dream

How an introvert with a big voice translated a rootless childhood and dark thoughts into the year's most exciting rock breakthrough

FOR MITSKI, AMERICAN POP CULTURE has been a lifelong infatuation, for better and worse. The 25-year-old singer – whose new album, *Puberty 2*, stands as one of 2016's rawest and most assured rock LPs – was born in Japan and grew up shuttling around the world: China, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Turkey, numerous stops in between.

She made uneasy peace with this unmoored life by clutching certain American exports. "I created this romanticized America in my head," she recalls, although "the only access I had to America was *The Simpsons*, Britney Spears, 'NSync and teen movies: We had a tape of *The Breakfast Club* I watched religiously."

When she finally enrolled in an American high school, she discovered the gap between fantasy and reality. "I remember thinking this boy was cute, and I thought the way that American high schoolers fell in love was that they'd literally just look at each other until they said hi and started going out – because that's how it was in movies. So I'd just stare at this boy. And one day in the hall he was like, 'That's her, she keeps staring at me!'" She scowls, evoking his disdain. "I was like, 'Oh, noooooooo.'"

"People said I'm weird. Being an outsider makes you a good writer."

The story captures the wryness, yearning and rootlessness that animate Mitski's best songs. She tells it over tea in San Francisco: She's in the middle of a national tour, sharing a rental van with her band, crashing nightly on couches, air mattresses and, every so often, hotel beds. "It's not that glamorous," she says. She has no home to speak of: She gave up her New York apartment to save money, moving her stuff

into her parents' place in Pennsylvania and sleeping there when she isn't on the road. "I haven't paid rent on a place since April last year. It all goes into music, food and the occasional medical bill." She smiles and adds, "New York is shitty unless you're literally Taylor Swift."

For Mitski (full name: Mitski Miyawaki), the wandering life is worth it for the gigs, where increasingly big crowds come to hear her lay beautiful vocal lines – and occasional screams – over fat, catchy riffs indebted to punk, garage and Nineties alt-rock. (Carrie Brownstein called *Puberty 2* "one of the best things I've heard all year! And one of the only things constituting good news lately.") "I'm not an innovator," Mitski says. "Kanye West makes music in order to progress something – make something new."

A Down-Home Songwriting Ace Breaks Out

Brent Cobb jumps from county jail to country radio

When Brent Cobb was five, he saw songwriting up close while visiting family in Cleveland. "It was the first time I'd ever seen snow," says the Georgia-raised singer. "My daddy and my mama's brother were writing a song called 'Country Bound.' It was my favorite song. They'd play it every year over the holidays." Their family's



Cobb

living-room hit – his father was a "weekend warrior" with a country band – inspired Cobb's current career as an A-list Nashville songwriter with clients including Miranda Lambert and Luke Bryan. Now, "Country Bound" is a standout on what promises to be Cobb's breakout LP as a singer-songwriter. "It came full circle," says Cobb, 30, with a laugh.

Due in October, *Shine on Rainy Day* is a vivid collection

DON VANCE

I don't care about making anything new. I make music to express an emotion, and if the emotion is nostalgic, so be it."

Even though she was classically trained, at SUNY Purchase – after giving up on a passing dream of being a filmmaker – her love of pop remains: She's covered One

GLOBE-TROTTER
Mitski
Miyawaki



Direction and Calvin Harris live; in conversation, she rhapsodizes about Young Thug. "People don't realize what he's doing with his voice – he's really expressing," she says. She also cites a love of artists as varied as Björk ("The first time I heard *Vespertine* I was scared"), Charles Mingus and Thelonious Monk ("They do shit that's not straight classic jazz, but they're never pushing away the audience").

Puberty 2's title reflects Mitski's interest in awkward emotional fumbling, which has dogged her well past adolescence. "It's always about wanting something: happiness, or a place to belong," she says. She recalls switching homes as a kid and trying on different personalities: "In ninth grade I decided I was gonna be friendly, outgoing, well-liked. Then I moved and I didn't talk to anyone, actively didn't have friends, and people thought I was weird."

She believes that "being an outsider makes you a really good writer," but her identity-juggling had a dark element, too. "I've always felt useless," she says. "There are so many moments where I was like, 'I could die and it wouldn't matter. I should just kill myself, because what is the point – you're just taking up space.'"

I ask if she was literally suicidal. "I don't know if I can answer that. It's more a state of not taking care of myself – doing things and having the thought 'This is dangerous, this could kill me,' and doing it anyway." Does she mean drugs? "I shouldn't answer that." The point, she says, is that music helped her turn self-destructive impulses into productive, fulfilling ones. "I just couldn't live without a reason," she says. "But when I started making music, I was like, 'This is something I can believe I was meant to do.'"

JONAH WEINER

of down-home storytelling that conjures the rural heart and craft of Kris Kristofferson, Merle Haggard and Tom T. Hall. Its lean, largely acoustic sound was shaped in part by another influential family member, cousin Dave Cobb, who recently produced hit albums by Chris Stapleton and Jason Isbell.

"I think he's a redneck Paul Simon," says the producer, who first heard his younger cousin when a family member slipped him a demo tape at a funeral. "He was 17, but he was already writing really deep songs. They really encapsu-

lated that rural South Georgia landscape and dialect." As a teenager, Brent went to California to record his first album with his cousin and his hero Shooter Jennings. The resulting 2006 LP didn't catch fire. Brent moved to Nashville in 2008 and soon started working for music publisher Frank Liddell, who shaped Lambert's breakthrough, *Kerosene* (Lambert would later record Brent's canny ode to tradition, "Old Shit"). He also got a leg up from Bryan, whose version of Cobb's "Tailgate Blues" is one of the most soulful moments in Bryan's catalog.

Cobb always wanted to be a writer of some sort, and it's fitting: Ask about nearly any song of his and you'll get a yarn unspooled in a swamp-deep drawl, like the one describing "Black Crow," in which a guy robs a corner store, feels bad about another guy getting busted for it, and winds up turning himself in. It's not strictly autobiographical, but Cobb has seen the inside of a county jail a couple of times: "I wrote that when I was doing some things in my life that I didn't feel so good about." Nowadays, he's feeling pretty damn good. **WILL HERMES**



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YouTube vs. the Music Industry

The video service has put billions of dollars into artists' pockets – so why are Taylor Swift and others pissed off?

LAST YEAR, DEADMAU5 SENT HIS lawyer, Dina LaPolt, a Skype message: "Please shut this down." He'd found a YouTube channel with 400 unauthorized videos containing his songs: album tracks, remixes and full live shows. "We had to have a paralegal sit in my office for six hours and send 400 take-downs," says LaPolt. "After that, the channel shut down – and it popped up again two days later. It's a big issue for him."

YouTube, with more than 1 billion users, is the most popular source for music streaming on the Internet. But it's become a source of frustration for artists including Taylor Swift, Paul McCartney, Beck, Kings of Leon and oth-



ers, who recently signed an open letter to Congress calling for reform on the law that allows YouTube to host millions of unauthorized videos. "The artist has no choice – their music is on YouTube even if they don't want it there," says Irving Azoff, manager of acts such as the Eagles and Van Halen. Azoff has published a separate letter to YouTube, calling for action on two issues: its relatively small royalty payments to artists, and its inability to efficiently remove content from the site.

The music business has less bargaining power than ever: As album

BAD BLOOD Clockwise from top right: Swift, Deadmau5, Caleb Followill and Beck, who have all signed the open letter to Congress.

FROM LEFT: LAURA ROBERTS/INVISION/AP IMAGES; ANDY BUCHANAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; YCG/GETTY IMAGES; ALLEN BEREZOVSKY/GETTY IMAGES

Two irresistible flavors

Hey, I know those guys.

I can't believe they're making a megastar like me do this.



Winner Chocolate Category.
Survey of 40,000 people by TNS

sales have fallen about 60 percent in the past decade, YouTube has become increasingly important – 98 percent of American Internet users ages 18 to 24 visit the site – and the company says its ad sales have delivered \$3 billion to artists and content creators. “YouTube has become radio for kids,” says Ken Levitan, who manages Kings of Leon, Cheap Trick and others.

But unlike radio, Azoff says, YouTube is a bad business partner. It allows leaked material and poor-quality live music to stay online. And it pays far less on average than streaming services like Spotify and Apple Music. “YouTube revenue for a superstar artist is a joke,” says Azoff. “Their accountings are too complicated and opaque to give an accurate per-stream number. They’re acting like an old record company by making the accountings so difficult, the artist remains in the dark.”

Like any site, YouTube can stream material without artists’ permission thanks to 1998’s Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA). The law allows companies to post copyrighted content online if they agree to take it down upon request. But in the YouTube age, this means artists’ representatives need to monitor hundreds of millions of new videos every day.

YouTube says it has addressed the issue, spending \$60 million to build a “Content ID” program, which uses digital “fingerprints” to identify pirated material. This system catches 99.5 percent of copyrighted material, says Robert Kyncl, YouTube’s chief business officer. “I challenge somebody to find a better system of copyright management anywhere,” says Kyncl. “It’s been nearly a decade of us investing in the system when no one else does anything.” Azoff says YouTube’s 99.5 percent claim isn’t good enough: He estimates that the videos it doesn’t catch account for “48 million unauthorized plays per day. That still requires an army to manually claim the remaining videos.”

Some artists hire private services to manage the flood of content. Queen uses Believe Digital, a music-distribution company that employs a 40-person staff, to issue takedown notices or monetize unofficial videos. “If we don’t want something, we block it,” says Denis Ladegaillerie, the company’s chief executive. “If we want it available, we make money. It’s a significant source of revenue that did not exist before.” Other artists throw up their hands: “YouTube destroys my business and makes money by enabling theft worldwide,” says Steve Miller, whose material, including full

albums like *Greatest Hits 1974-1978*, can be found on YouTube.

Azoff points out that YouTube can fully control content when it wants to – it keeps pornography off, plus it charges \$10 per month to watch original shows. “Taylor Swift should be able to decide which of her songs are available for free and which are part of a paid subscription service,” he wrote. His proposal? For YouTube and its parent company, Google, to join him in lobbying Congress to reform the DMCA. So far neither is onboard, and the tech industry’s response has been lukewarm (NOTE TO IRVING AZOFF: YOUTUBE DOESN’T NEED CHANGE. YOU DO, read a recent *Fortune* headline).

Corynne McSherry, legal director for the Electronic Frontier Foundation, which advocates for digital rights, points out Azoff may be forgetting that things have gotten better in recent years: “I don’t think copyright owners appreciate what they got. In 1997, if you wanted to get music taken offline, you had to go to court.”

But Azoff isn’t backing down. “Some of us believe we live in an era of government by Google,” he says. “Their power to influence Washington is unprecedented. But you can’t walk away from a fight just because it is going to be hard.” STEVE KNOPPER

under 200 calories.

I don't like the way people are looking at us.



I better be getting paid overtime for this.



IT CAN LOOK A BIT STRANGE – ‘Who’s this old guy in a school suit?’” says AC/DC guitarist Angus Young, 61. “Somebody once commented, ‘From a distance, he looks quite youthful.’ It’s only when you get up close that you can see the weathered look.” That wear and tear are real for Young as he leads AC/DC through their toughest and possibly final world tour, which ends September 20th in Philadelphia. But he speaks candidly and as cheerfully as possible about the severe hearing problems that recently forced singer Brian Johnson to retire from touring; the immediate offer to fill in from Guns N’ Roses vocalist Axl Rose; bassist Cliff Williams’ recent announcement that this tour would be his last; and the current health of ex-guitarist and Angus’ older brother, Malcolm, who suffers from dementia. “It’s hard to communicate,” Angus admits. “I do pass on messages. I can’t be a hundred percent sure it goes in there. But I let him know there are a lot of people missing him.”

Axl is used to running his own ship. Did you have to talk to him about how you do things – like being on time?

He’s been really good. He prepares himself, ready to go. We sit and chew the fat before we get on, work out what songs we want to do. It’s gotta be fun for him, and for us. In the beginning, he was confined [with a foot injury] to that chair he borrowed from Dave Grohl. But as soon as he could, he was out and moving.

How did you get Axl to step in for Brian?

Axl contacted a production guy who had done stuff for us. He said, “I know these guys. They have a work ethic. They want to finish these dates.” He volunteered. He came to a rehearsal place we set up in Atlanta, and he’d done his homework. He had a few songs like “Touch Too Much” [on 1979’s *Highway to Hell*] – “Can you play this one?” “No, we never learned it.” We had never attempted to play it live.

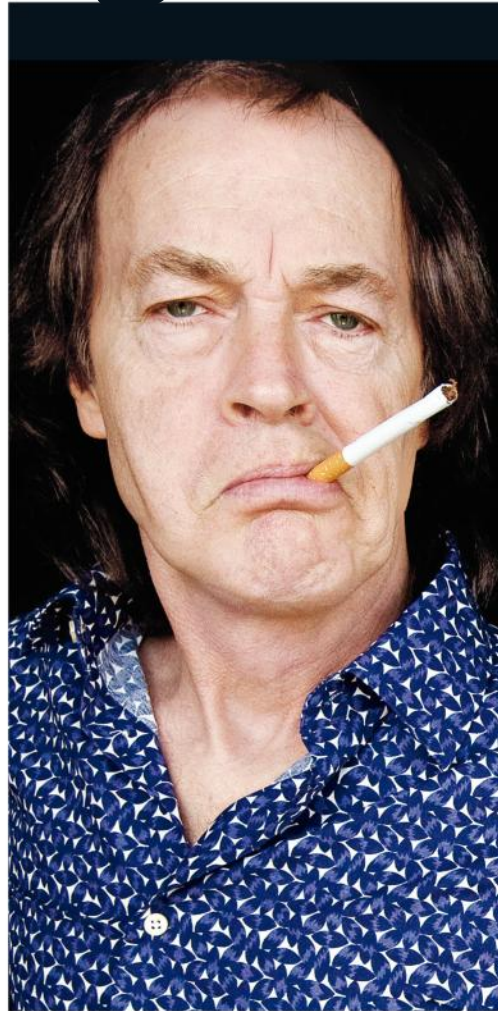
Does Axl sound more like Brian or the late Bon Scott?

He’s more in the Bon style – the rock & roll character. And he’s got his own folksy humor. He’s pretty quick with a quip. Axl has different vocal ranges. You can hear him one way in a Bon song. Then he can flip and do Brian, the higher register.

Was Brian having hearing problems before you started the tour?

He was having problems when we were rehearsing for Coachella [in 2015]. He already had one bad ear.

Q&A



Angus Young

The AC/DC guitarist on life with Axl, Brian Johnson’s exit, missing his brother Malcolm, and why this tour might be the last

BY DAVID FRICKE

He damaged it in a car accident. The one good ear was rapidly dropping. We were in Australia, and he was seeing a specialist. Each show he did, he had to get monitored and treated. But it was becoming too hard for him.

Do you think Cliff’s decision to retire is related to Brian leaving?

Cliff made it known before we’d even started touring – this would be his last. Besides myself, Cliff has been there the longest, since 1977. Cliff and Brian are in the same age bracket. They like to go out, hit the pubs. They had the bond.

What is it like touring without Malcolm on guitar? Is your nephew Stevie filling that hole for you?

Sometimes I do a double take. I hear the sound behind me and think, “That sounds so Mal.” When Stevie was younger, he really focused on what Mal did. It’s not an easy thing. You gotta be solid, confident. It looks simple. It is definitely not simple.

Malcolm’s guitar-playing sounded a lot like his personality – forward and determined.

He was older than me – I always looked up to him. In the studio, I would fiddle about with guitar sounds – and fiddle my way right out of the ball field [laughs]. Malcolm would dial me in, a big, fat sound, and I’d go, “Oh, wow!”

Do you now wonder if it was time to quit when Malcolm couldn’t continue – that you pushed the band too far?

That might be the case. But Malcolm was always one to battle through. He would look at me in times of crisis and go, “We’ll just go in and do some work. We’ll sit and write some songs.” He had that drive, and I feel obligated to keep it going, maybe because I was there in the beginning with him.

Have you thought about your own future after the tour ends? You’ve never played in any other band.

That’s true. At this point, I don’t know. We were committed to finishing the tour. Who knows what I’ll feel after? When you sign on and say, “I’m gonna do this and that,” it’s always good to say at the end of it, “I’ve done all I said I would do.”

That was always the idea, especially when we were younger – me, Malcolm, Bon. You had to show up and be on time. You’d be playing in a pub in the afternoon. Then late at night, you’d be playing a club. You got into that habit: “If we don’t play, we don’t eat.”

Who else would you like to play with if you had the shot?

You’d have to resurrect a lot of people from the dead, I think [laughs]. I’d sit down with Keith Richards, do something. He’s a rhythm guy like Mal.

THE BOYS
ARE BACK

Nineties-era
*Beavis &
Butt-Head*
needs more
airtime.



I Want My MTV Classic – To Be So Much Better

Opening the vault is the best idea MTV has
had in years – they just need to do it right

BY ROB SHEFFIELD

MTV CLASSIC LAUNCHED ON August 1st, the 35th anniversary of the network's debut, opening the vaults to a pop-culture treasure trove that's been gathering dust for decades. They should have done this years ago. But MTV Classic is a mess so far. It can't figure out what it wants to be – in the immortal words of Beavis: Change it, butt-munch.

The greatness of MTV was always the chaotic jumble of music videos – that's what made them the most influential and innovative television breakthrough of their time. They had so much space to fill – 24 hours a day – but nobody made videos except Brit poseurs, art freaks and thirsty post-punk nobodies, and MTV had to play them all. Yet the poignancy of MTV is that they couldn't wait to stop playing music and turn into a real station – with the same crummy game shows, soaps and sitcoms as any other network.

Unfortunately, MTV Classic focuses on the network's original programming – but remembering MTV for the shows would be like commemorating Prince for his acting. I'd trade the entire run of *Laguna Beach* or *The Hills* for one Adam and the Ants video, and so would you. There were some keepers, but for

every *Beavis & Butt-Head* or *The State* or *The Andy Dick Show*, you'd get countless hours of *The Blame Game* or *Teen Mom* or *A Shot at Love With Tila Tequila*. Look at a triumph of Eighties obsession like Netflix's *Stranger Things* – heavily influenced by the ambience of MTV videos, yet not the least bit influenced by any of MTV's own feeble efforts at dramas.

Even when MTV Classic shows *Beavis & Butt-Head*, it sticks to the disastrous 2011 reboot. (Shut up, fart-knocker!) MTV Classic needs to embrace the weirdness that was MTV's one and only claim to brilliance. Think of all the gems the network's sitting on – it could just rerun a random day of music videos from 1982, or 1994, or 1999. It could show the night in 1983 when Duran Duran were guest VJs. (They debuted the "Save a Prayer" video. It was glorious.) It could break out the VMAs that Chris Rock hosted, or all that 1980s post-punk footage, or even the MTV inaugural ball for Bill Clinton, where Michael Stipe and Natalie Merchant sang "To Sir With Love." If MTV Classic wants to carve a cultural place for itself in today's crowded airwaves, it'll give up on the dumb hope of ever passing for normal television. MTV always sucked at normal – that's exactly why they mattered.

The WATCH LIST

The good, the bad and the
deeply disturbing

HOT

Carly
Chaikin is
Mr. Robot's
secret
weapon as
fsociety's
most
badass
hacker. ▶



◀ *BoJack*,
our favorite
drunk
cartoon
horse.



Walton
Goggins,
psycho in
a bow tie,
steals the
show on *Vice
Principals*. ▶



◀ *Bill
Simmons*
maybe
should
stick to
writing.

We've
all lived
through six
seasons of
*Toddlers
& Tiaras*.
When will
the night-
mare
end? ▼



▲ *Action
Bronson
and Friends*
– just like
MST3000,
but with
weed.

▼ *Bachelor
in Paradise*
– STDs
take a
vacation.

NOT

Random Notes



Flea ripped new songs and put on '92-level hops.



FUTURE IS NOW Future brought his hits, and guest Chance the Rapper, to his Friday-afternoon set. "Lollapalooza was lit!" Future says.



Thom Yorke rocked the keys on *A Moon Shaped Pool*'s "Ful Stop."

Lolla's Birthday Blowout

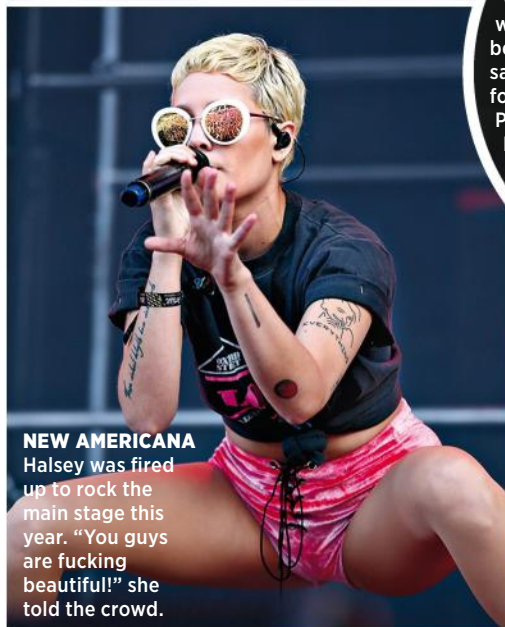
Lollapalooza marked its 25th anniversary in Chicago with Radiohead, Major Lazer, the Red Hot Chili Peppers – who first played Lolla in '92, when it was a touring festival – and Jane's Addiction, who performed all of 1990's *Ritual de lo Habitual*. Flea said watching Jane's set "brought up a cavalcade of emotions."



"I love what we're becoming," says Lolla founder Perry Farrell.



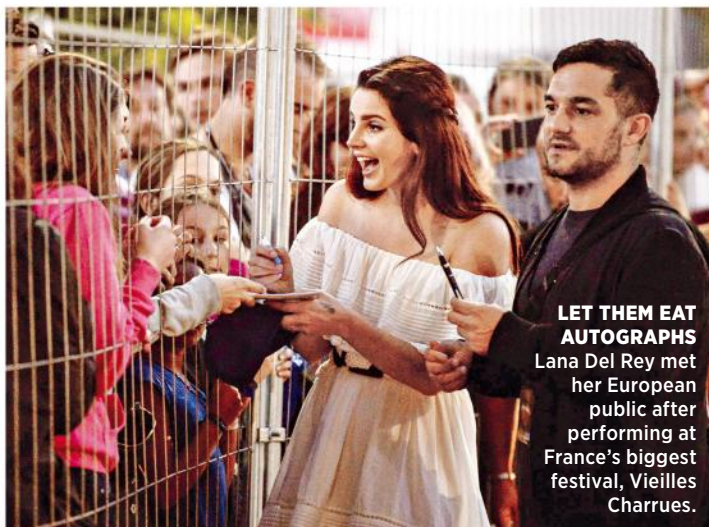
FIRST FESTIVAL FAN Native Chicagoan Malia Obama, 18, and friends caught sets by Major Lazer and Mac Miller.



NEW AMERICANA Halsey was fired up to rock the main stage this year. "You guys are fucking beautiful!" she told the crowd.



PRETTY MAJOR Diplo (right) put *ROLLING STONE*'s party over the top with a surprise Major Lazer performance, and hung with bandmate Jillionaire and headliners MØ and ASAP Ferg. (from left)



LET THEM EAT AUTOGRAPHS
Lana Del Rey met her European public after performing at France's biggest festival, Vieilles Charrues.

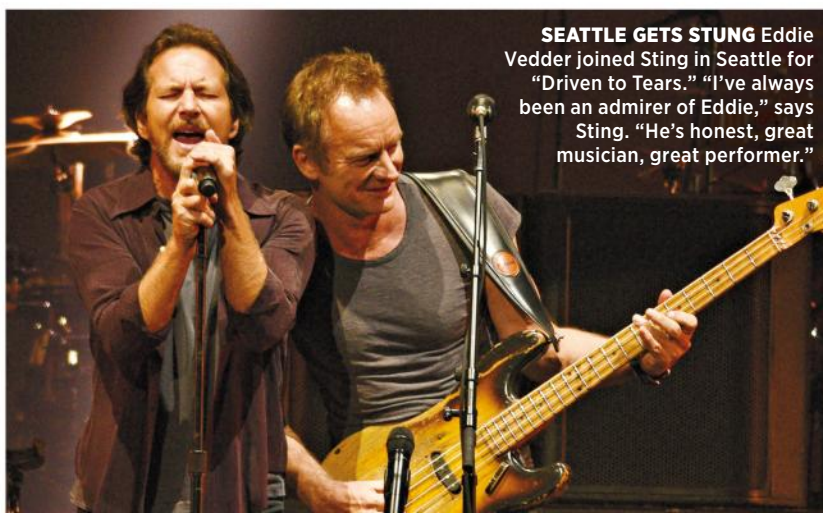


KING KENDRICK
Kendrick Lamar ruled New York's Panorama Fest with a fiery set. "Right now we are going to celebrate life," he said.



Katy Roars at the DNC

No pop star works harder to get Hillary Clinton elected than Katy Perry, who has played rallies since Iowa's caucuses. "I have a couple of saved messages on my phone from HRC," she said. (She also exchanges tweets with Hillary, who told Perry to "keep letting us hear you Roar.") The day Clinton got the Democratic nomination in Philadelphia, Perry sang her new single "Rise" and hung backstage with America's most powerful Katy Cat.



SEATTLE GETS STUNG Eddie Vedder joined Sting in Seattle for "Driven to Tears." "I've always been an admirer of Eddie," says Sting. "He's honest, great musician, great performer."



SHAKE IT OFF Alabama Shakes closed their headlining set at Newport Folk Festival by covering Bob Seger's "Night Moves," joined by Dawes. "That was a real highlight," says Brittany Howard. "We've been wanting to play that song for a very long time."



Mike D spun some Tupac, M.I.A. and Beastie Boys remixes in Panorama's DJ tent.

HILLARY'S NEW DEAL

How a Clinton presidency would carry on the Democratic Party's progressive traditions and transform America

★ By Sean Wilentz ★

THE POLITICAL SPECTACLE of the past year has turned the 2016 election into a chasm with profound historical significance. By nominating Donald Trump, the Republican Party has become the vehicle for an authoritarian, nativist nationalism that until now lurked at the fringes of modern American politics. Hillary Clinton has launched a mainstream progressive campaign, in an updated Democratic tradition that stretches back to Franklin D. Roosevelt. This is the choice Americans face – between alternatives as starkly opposed to each other as in any election in our history, excepting the one in 1860, which led to the Civil War.

This year's political conventions substantively and symbolically revealed the fate of both parties in this crucial election year. The Democratic delegates in Philadelphia looked as culturally polyglot as the party's rank and file, affirming how much the party has changed over the past half century. The 1964 convention in Atlantic City that nominated Lyndon B. Johnson was roiled by the unsuccessful efforts of black voting-rights campaigners to seat a racially integrated delegation from Mississippi – the last stand inside the party of the old Democratic Solid South. Five decades later, the convention hall was a sea of brown and black and white faces as well as LGBT rainbows. And, of course, the convention was nominating the first female presidential candidate of a major party in American history – a connection that Clinton, who toned down the gender angle in her 2008 bid for the nomination, has now made central to her campaign.

Yet the convention also pulled its multicultural celebrations together into a patriotic whole, overcoming the inchoate diversity that has too often bedeviled the Democrats in recent years. As a direct challenge to the Republican nationalists' nationalism, the Democrats proclaimed their own pro-immigrant nationalism, at once of this moment and a reprise of traditional Democratic themes. The sight of Khizr Khan, the Muslim immigrant father of an American soldier slain in Iraq, pulling from his pocket a copy of the Constitution and then contemptuously but calmly asking whether Trump had ever read it stopped the proceedings cold and dramatized the Democrats' rearticulated national pride. In the face of Trump's isolationism, the Democrats celebrated America's indispensable role in global affairs, not least in the NATO alliance, which elicited American flag waving and chants of "USA! USA!," reviving the kind of liberal internationalism that was central to the party of FDR and Harry Truman but had receded in the aftermath of Vietnam. And throughout the convention, there were other reminders of a fortified living connection with the past.

The Democrats repeatedly entwined diversity and inclusion with their party's old-time convictions about economic inequality and opportunity, convictions that have badly needed refurbishing and restating in the wake of the Great Recession, convictions that Sen. Bernie Sanders' stunning primary challenge forced to the very center of the debate. There on the convention stage was Sanders himself, railing against "the 40-year decline of our middle class" and "the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality that we currently experience."

There was Sen. Elizabeth Warren, explaining how the system is rigged for CEOs and predators like Trump. And there, too, was Hillary Clinton, proclaiming that "Democrats are the party of working people," but the party needed to show it better; then saying, "Our economy isn't working the way it should because our democracy isn't working the way it should"; and touting a government program funded by targeted tax hikes on the rich, the "biggest investment in new, good-paying jobs since World War II," to rebuild America's infrastructure.

Vice presidential nominee Tim Kaine pointed to the Democrats' ownership of change and continuity in his acceptance speech when he talked of writing "the next chapter in our great and proud story," from Thomas Jefferson to JFK and LBJ, from Martin Luther King Jr. and Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta to Bill and Barack, and, finally, to Hillary Clinton.

The opposite was true for the Republicans in Cleveland. Unlike the Democrats', the Republicans' nearly lily-white gathering looked a lot like long-ago Republican conventions. Yet there was virtually nothing in the nobler aspirations of the GOP's past, including the Reagan years, that Trump could hold up as his own. The negative tone of the speeches brought to mind instead the acrid paleo-conservative Pat Buchanan at the 1992 convention, vowing to "take our country back" from the forces of depravity, block by inner-city block. The closest that Trump came to quoting a Republican president in his own acceptance speech was his channeling of Richard Nixon's fearsome, racially charged invocation of "law and order" from

1968. Clinton, however, in her acceptance speech, was able to sum up her case against Trump with the words of “a great Democratic president” at “a much more perilous time,” the founder of modern Democratic politics, Franklin D. Roosevelt: “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” In that rhetorical difference, and all clashing politics behind it, lies the essential choice Americans will face in November.

POLITICS, RALPH WALDO EMERSON wrote, is divided between the party of Conservatism and the party of Innovation, a distinction that corresponds to deeper divisions in the human soul between the Past and the Future, between Memory and Hope. Emerson would have been appalled at the degradation of recent American politics, but we can still see in this year’s election, refracted, the eternal struggle between Memory and Hope. Yet Trump’s politics of Memory are hardly Conservative, apart from the turbocharged tax cuts; they are a concoction of bigoted, insular fantasies that Reagan-era Republicans repudiated. And Clinton’s politics of Innovation and Hope are not at all divorced from the Past – they are deeply rooted in the long traditions of her party.

The fury of the campaign has something to do with Memory (or, more exactly, Nostalgia) and something to do with Hope. But the creation of the chasm in 2016 has more to do with history. Trump’s rise depended on the hollowing out of the Republican Party over the past 25 years, beginning with the ascendancy of Newt Gingrich, in which successive waves of increasingly right-wing insurgents, backed by reactionary plutocrats like the Koch brothers, drove away the party’s moderates and rattled many of its traditional conservatives. Trump took the trend to the outer limits of politics by appealing directly to nativist and isolationist sentiments – and he handily defeated for the nomination both the remnants of the old GOP establishment, above all Jeb Bush, and fire-eating darlings of the Tea Party like Ted Cruz. Clinton’s candidacy, meanwhile, also has to do with history, in particular her role in the contentious evolution of the Democratic Party going all the way back to the New Deal era.

As much as Trump’s rise catalyzed the collapse of the Republican center, Clinton’s success marked the resilience of the Democratic center. Clinton won the primaries because vital, loyal constituents inside the

Democratic base, above all nonwhite voters, backed her convincingly. Most important, she enjoyed the overwhelming support of self-identified Democrats, on the order of 64 percent to 35 percent. Although sometimes cast as a victory of the party establishment over a rank-and-file insurgency, Clinton’s triumph showed that she was the strong favorite of the party’s base.

Clinton’s politics were also in line with the main themes of the Democratic Party’s as they have developed over the past 80-odd years. Assembling various strains of reformist politics, Roosevelt’s New Deal expounded a greatly enlarged conception of federal power to address the emergency of the Great Depression, to attack economic inequality and the power of those FDR

Truman’s desegregation of the armed forces in 1948, liberal Democrats pushed their party hard to renounce its segregationist past – in Hubert H. Humphrey’s words, “to get out of the shadow of states’ rights, and to walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights.” LBJ’s embrace of the civil rights movement and his alliance with Martin Luther King Jr. produced the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. The party of economic egalitarianism was now the party of racial egalitarianism as well. And with the passage in 1965 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, overturning 40 years of narrow quotas, the Democrats reasserted their role as the party of immigrants.

Democrats suffered through their own crackup in 1968, badly divided over Johnson’s war in Vietnam and battered by white defections to the Republicans over civil rights. The conservative turn begun by Nixon augured the rise of Ronald Reagan and a political ascendancy premised on a repudiation of the Great Society and the entire New Deal tradition. Although they still controlled a majority in the House, the Democrats were crushed in three successive presidential elections. The party seemed adrift in national politics, a collection of special interests without purpose or direction.

To the shock of the Reagan Republicans, though, Bill Clinton won the White House in 1992, then won re-election in 1996, the first Democrat to do so since FDR. Clinton embarked on his own updated version of the New Deal tradition, advancing a domestic program he called “Putting People First,” and devoting enormous energy

to securing the comprehensive health care reform envisaged more than 40 years earlier by Truman. Clinton also tried to adapt to changing times, reforming what he considered outmoded government programs, taking account of the unsettling realities of a post-Cold War global economy and dealing with pressing new problems like a pandemic of drug-related violent crime.

The defeat of Clinton’s health care reform paved the way for the election in 1994 of a more ideologically driven conservative Republican House majority, led by the new House speaker, Newt Gingrich. Thereafter, Clinton would have to bob and weave in order to advance his reforms, while thwarting Republican efforts to gut existing social programs like Medicare – political necessities that his critics, seizing upon an insider’s term of art, condemned as “tri-



STANDARD-BEARER

The Democratic convention revived the liberal internationalism that was central to the party of FDR and Harry Truman.

called “economic royalists,” and to expand public works for public benefits. Successive Democratic presidents adapted New Deal principles to the changing situation of a more affluent America after World War II, and put their own stamp on FDR’s legacy, from Harry S. Truman’s Fair Deal to John F. Kennedy’s New Frontier to Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society.

There were important continuities over the decades, none more so than the prolonged battle for universal health care insurance begun by Truman, which LBJ advanced to the point of enacting Medicare and Medicaid in 1965. Democratic programs regularly included key elements such as raising the minimum wage and expanding aid to education. And there were historic changes as well, most importantly on racial equality and civil rights. Starting with

angulation.” Clinton also faced ire from organized labor for moving ahead with NAFTA (with the assurance, he believed, that in the end it would help create American jobs by increasing American exports). The left vilified him for signing a welfare-reform bill that he himself knew was severely flawed and would later try to correct – but which did help move millions into paid employment, instead of what FDR called “the pauperism of a dole.”

Whatever its shortcomings and missteps, real and imagined, the Clinton White House rescued Democratic politics from the dolor of the Reagan years. It pressed forward on making the largest federal investment in education in 30 years, on strengthening environmental-protection laws, on protecting Medicare. When thwarted on comprehensive health care reform, Clinton secured coverage for 5 million children, the largest investment in health care for minors since 1965. The administration strengthened civil rights enforcement, salvaged affirmative action from fierce political and judicial attack and appointed a record number of African-Americans and women to the federal

editor Howell Raines, the *Times* became something of a whipping post for the Clintons. Maureen Dowd outdid herself and everyone else on Hillary (as she continues to do today), writing scores of columns attacking the Clintons as a couple – “like a virus or an alien that needs a host body to survive” – and Hillary above all, as a power-hungry cynic and a betrayer of feminism who with her husband had “chosen tactics over truth with such consistency that it’s impossible to accept anything they say.” Thus was established the abiding myth of Hillary Clinton as a deceitful harridan, a fiction that seems to have become hard-wired in our politics despite all the evidence to the contrary, including the recent report by the distinguished and authoritative fact-checking project PolitiFact that Clinton was the most truthful candidate, Democratic or Republican, in the 2016 primary season.

Where Speaker Gingrich and the House Republicans failed in overthrowing President Clinton in 1998-99, the conservative Supreme Court, in its *Bush v. Gore* ruling in 2000, succeeded in ensuring that Clinton’s vice president, Al Gore, would not succeed him. Then, after eight disas-

fore him) surprised and infuriated the Republicans by winning re-election. Since then, when not fending off government shutdowns and threats of fiscal disaster, Obama has largely had to bypass Congress to get anything done.

AFTER HER TERM AS OBAMA’S SECRETARY OF state, Hillary Clinton stood as the most likely Democratic successor to Obama, and the foremost public figure in the mainstream Democratic tradition. Her early career had schooled her in those politics, from her years of work with the Children’s Defense Fund and the Legal Services Corporation to her advocacy for education and rural health care as first lady of Arkansas to her spearheading of health care reform and then children’s health-insurance reform in the White House. As a U.S. senator from New York, she served on the Armed Services Committee, where she focused on expanding health benefits for veterans and their families as well as National Guard members and reservists; she wrote a law to supply grants to local and state governments to aid family caregivers; and while

WHILE TRUMP’S RISE WRECKS THE GOP, CLINTON’S SUCCESS MARKS THE RESILIENCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTER.

bench. It also oversaw the longest economic expansion in U.S. history, a reduction in unemployment to the lowest levels in more than 30 years, the creation of more than 22 million new jobs, and the fastest and longest growth in real wages since the 1960s. It accomplished all of this despite opposition from angry and increasingly reckless congressional Republicans who, after shutting down the federal government twice and incurring voters’ wrath, sought Clinton’s removal through an enormously unpopular impeachment drive.

The administration also persevered despite baseless vitriolic attacks on First Lady Hillary Clinton. A chief source of the character assassination, interestingly, was *The New York Times*, which legitimized the caricature of Clinton in the political mainstream, distant from the fever swamps of the right and left. William Safire, the former Nixon propagandist, filled his *Times* columns with anti-Hillary calumny, most notably in a column in 1996, when, with no apparent evidence, he blasted her over the Whitewater pseudoscandal, calling her “a congenital liar” who “had good reasons to lie; she is in the longtime habit of lying; and she has never been called to account for lying herself or in suborning lying in her aides and friends.” Under editorial-page

trous years of George W. Bush, the results of 2008 marked a clear Democratic comeback, electing to the presidency an African-American pledged to securing universal health care, and enlarging the Democratic majority sent to the House two years earlier. But the epic financial collapse of 2008-09 clouded those victories. Modern Democratic politics were born in 1933, when FDR entered the White House and made a new start after the Great Depression had already been underway for more than three years. Barack Obama was elected, however, only six weeks after the Great Crash of 2008. From the beginning, he had to halt economic free-fall as well as pursue the agenda on which he had run. He had to do so facing a Republican leadership that, on the very evening of his inauguration, pledged at a private meeting to obstruct and if necessary sabotage the White House’s legislative agenda. “We’ve gotta challenge them on every single bill,” said Rep. Kevin McCarthy, the Republicans’ new chief deputy whip.

Obama’s legislative successes in his first two years were remarkable: the historic Affordable Care Act, the comprehensive Dodd-Frank financial-regulation law and a substantial stimulus package. After the Tea Party midterms of 2010, though, the door would close on new legislation on a comparable scale, and would stay closed even after Obama (like Bill Clinton be-

fighting for immigration reform, she introduced an amendment to expand health coverage for low-income legal-immigrant children and pregnant mothers.

In 2007, before the Great Recession had hit, Clinton called for new regulations to crack down on financial derivatives and subprime mortgages and reinforce oversight of financial institutions. In 2008, in her first bid for the presidency, she assembled a broad agenda that covered the gamut of domestic policies from health care to equal pay for women. As secretary of state, Clinton mixed emphasizing her longstanding credo about advancing women’s rights as human rights with an insistence on American leadership in foreign affairs.

Pressed to define her politics in 2015, Clinton called herself “a progressive who likes to get things done,” which makes her sound like a reliable but less-than-romantic incremental reformer. She worked well in the Senate with Republicans like Lindsey Graham and John McCain, affirming her skills at overcoming even the bitterest partisan divides to enact reforms. But Clinton’s political realism serves her political principles, including her bedrock view, inherited from previous generations of Democrats, that it is up to government, as she puts it, “to rein in the excesses of capitalism so it doesn’t run amok” and, every once in a while, “to save capitalism from itself.” Although as a Democrat she is certainly pro-

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business, her record puts the lie to charges that she's a compliant tool of Wall Street. Her policy proposals in 2016 encompass a broad public imagination in the mainstream Democratic tradition, but adapted to our own time.

One example is Clinton's proposal to fund infrastructure improvement. The dire state of our bridges, roads, airports, mass transit and essential-service facilities like wastewater treatment plants has become a national scandal. The American Society of Civil Engineers in 2013 handed the country an overall grade of D+ on its infrastructure, reported an enormous backlog of overdue maintenance and desperate need for modernization, and estimated that it would take a total investment of \$3.6 trillion by 2020 to fix all that needed fixing. Yet Republicans have been notably hostile to funding infrastructure improvements. In 2011, for example, Senate Republicans defeated a modest \$60 billion infrastructure proposal, and then, four years later, they defeated a more ambitious \$478 billion White House plan sponsored in the Senate by Bernie Sanders. Finally, with the federal trust fund for highway improvement on the verge of running out, Congress approved a \$305 billion infrastructure package in 2015, the largest in a decade. And Trump, in one of his breaks from conservative Republican orthodoxy, shrewdly picked up the issue in the campaign, with a nebulous promise to spend half a trillion dollars on infrastructure overhauls, paid for with new debt and delivered "on time, on budget, way below costs, way below what anyone ever thought."

Clinton's proposal, by contrast, is exact and, given the existing political climate, at once realistic and ambitious. With some adjustments to the federal tax code aimed chiefly at the top 1 percent and 0.1 percent of earners, \$250 billion would be raised for the funding of roads, highways and airports. An additional \$25 billion would fund a project that was central to Bill Clinton's 1992 agenda and that as recently as 2011, House Republicans ridiculed as "dead on arrival": an infrastructure bank that would leverage capital for more improvements. And that is just the start.

Clinton's infrastructure improvements would also include making affordable broadband Internet available to every American household, while providing free Wi-Fi in public buildings and public trans-

portation. They would include modernizing dams and levees, saving water resources and generating clean energy. They would expand efforts to work with local governments in order to ensure that low-income communities would have cheaper transportation routes. They would, in short, address a number of problems worsened by the neglect and supply-side priorities of the Reagan era. And they would create as many as 3.25 million new jobs over five years from the direct spending alone.

Clinton's program for battling economic inequality is another series of reinventions



CHANGING OF THE GUARD

If Clinton succeeds Obama in the fall, her ambitious infrastructure plans would modernize the country's failing bridges and roads, install half a billion solar panels and create 3.25 million new jobs.

in the broad New Deal tradition. Her proposals include middle-class tax credits to be covered by raising taxes on the very wealthiest Americans and by closing tax loopholes; raising the federal minimum wage by 66 percent to \$12 an hour, while supporting a \$15 minimum in individual cities and states; protecting labor unions' collective-bargaining rights; and reducing child-care costs. To address the problems of climate change unimaginable to earlier generations, she has called for the installation of half a billion solar panels by the end of her first term, with the goal of providing clean renewable energy to every household in the country by 2027.

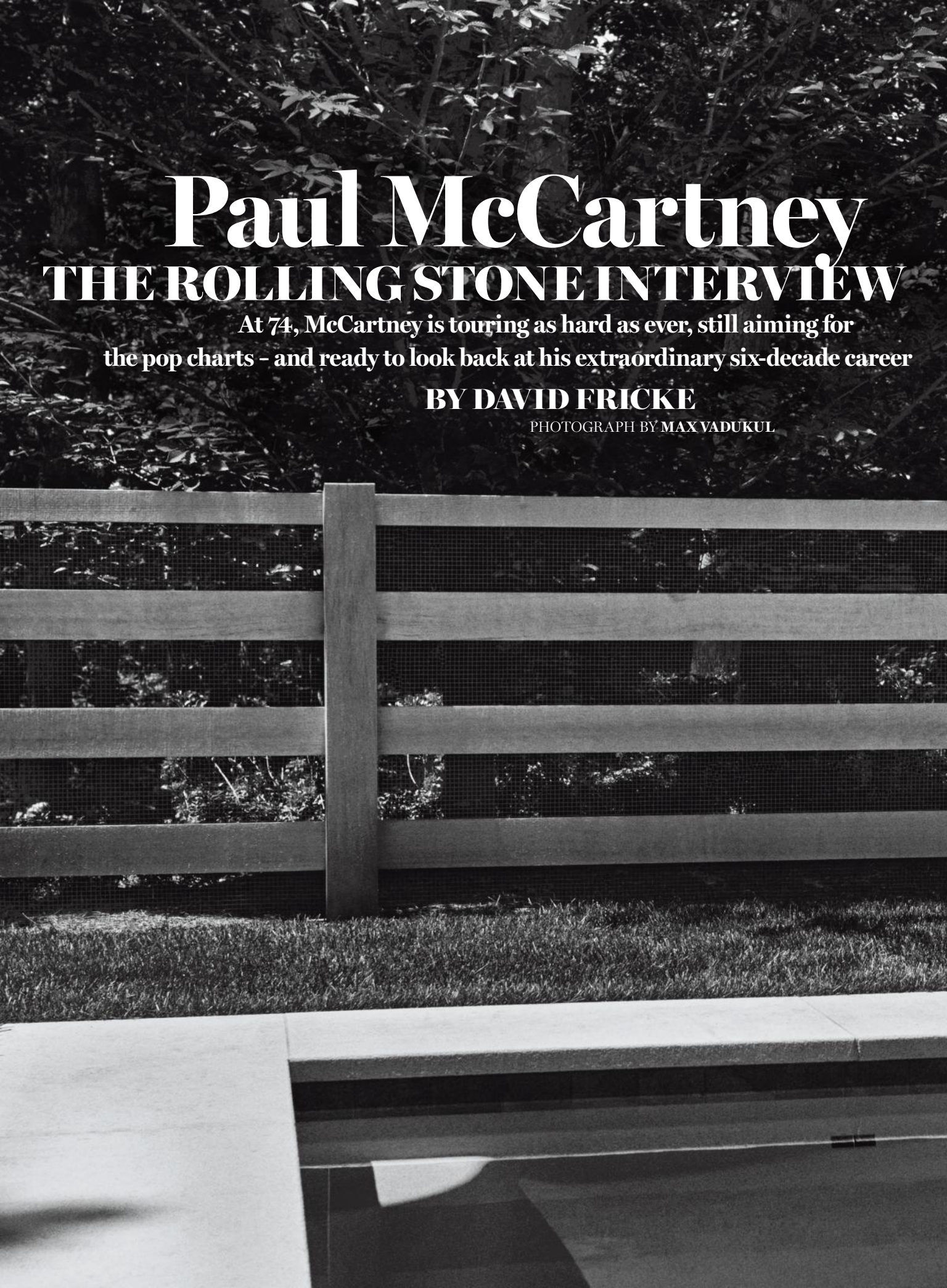
More implicit, but of crucial importance, are the progressive implications behind Clinton's promise to remake the Supreme

Court. In the 1930s, a conservative court dogged FDR's New Deal; in the 1950s and 1960s, decisions by the more liberal court headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren advanced, in particular, racial equality to the point where "Impeach Earl Warren" became a right-wing rallying cry. The calculated conservative reconstruction of the judiciary begun by Nixon and Reagan has in turn produced a Supreme Court often dominated by legal views associated with the late Justice Antonin Scalia, which produced decisions like *Bush v. Gore*, *Citizens United* and *Shelby County v. Holder* (which struck down key elements of the 1965 Voting Rights Act). Trump has vowed to appoint justices who think like Scalia. Clinton would create the first reliably progressive court since the 1970s.

All of this can sound like a laundry list of positions and proposals instead of a coherent philosophy of reform like, say, the New Deal or the Great Society. Indeed, since the advent of Reagan, successful Democrats have not affixed lasting labels to their administrations. (Bill Clinton tried, briefly, to call his administration the New Covenant, but mercifully that never got very far.) Yet there is also a great danger in overstating the coherence of the Democratic reformers of long ago. "The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands bold, persistent experimentation," FDR declared in 1932. "It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another."

Hillary Clinton has already indicated what she would pursue in her first 100 days in office: launching her infrastructure program; investing in renewable energy; tightening regulation of health-insurance and pharmaceutical companies; and expanding protection of voting rights. She has also said that she will nominate women for half of her Cabinet positions. And not far behind these initiatives are several others, including immigration reform and raising the minimum wage.

Even without a unifying title, it is a sweeping agenda, the latest updating of Democratic reformism. Democratic politics at their most fruitful have always been more improvisational than programmatic, more empirical than doctrinaire, taking on an array of issues, old and new, bound by the politics of Hope pressing against the politics of Nostalgia. So it was with FDR and Truman, so it has been with Barack Obama, and so it would be with Hillary Clinton. 



Paul McCartney

THE ROLLING STONE INTERVIEW

At 74, McCartney is touring as hard as ever, still aiming for the pop charts - and ready to look back at his extraordinary six-decade career

BY DAVID FRICKE

PHOTOGRAPH BY MAX VADUKUL



McCartney on
Long Island in July

PAUL MCCARTNEY STRUMS AN ACOUSTIC GUITAR on a sofa in his London office, humming to himself as he tries to recall a melody from his adolescence – one of the first, never-recorded songs he wrote with his teenage friend John Lennon, on their way to starting the Beatles in Liverpool. “It was like . . .” McCartney says, then hits a rockabilly rhythm on his guitar and sings in a familiar, robust voice: “They said our love was just fun/The day that our friendship begun/There’s no blue moon that I can see/There’s never been in history/Because our love was just fun.” ¶ “‘Just Fun,’” McCartney says, announcing the title proudly. “I had a little school-exercise book where I wrote those lyrics down. And in the top right-hand corner of the page, I put ‘A Lennon-McCartney original.’ It was humble beginnings,” he admits. “We developed from that.” ¶ It’s an extraordinary moment – but McCartney, 74 and currently on his latest tour of American arenas and stadiums, is never far from a performance.

Over two long interviews – first in London, then a week later in Philadelphia, backstage before a concert – McCartney often bursts into song to make a point: hitting chords from another of his teenage tunes on guitar, singing a slice of Ray Charles’ “What’d I Say,” and imitating the young Mick Jagger at an early Rolling Stones gig. On one occasion, McCartney does an impression of Lennon doing a Gene Vincent number during the Beatles’ bar-band days in Hamburg, Germany.

“It’s always held a fascination for me, getting up in front of people and performing,” McCartney says in Philadelphia. “From the beginning, I was trying to figure it out: What’s the best way to keep true to yourself yet have people on your side?” He is wearing a dark-blue short-sleeve shirt and jeans, his bare feet propped on a coffee table. His trailer has a curtain for a door, and visitors announce themselves by ringing a red cowbell on a table near the entrance because, he points out, “You can’t knock on a curtain.”

McCartney has just finished a soundcheck that was a show in itself: 12 songs, almost all of which won’t be played at the concert that night, including the Beatles’ 1964 ballad “I’ll Follow the Sun” and his 1971 curio “Ram On.” He is on the road again with his band of the past 15 years –

guitarists Rusty Anderson and Brian Ray, keyboard player Paul “Wix” Wickens and drummer Abe Laboriel Jr. – on the 50th anniversary of the summer that he, Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr quit the road. (“We’d had enough of playing rain-soaked stages with lousy PA’s,” McCartney says of the Beatles’ last tour, which ended at San Francisco’s Candlestick Park in August 1966.)

That manic era is celebrated in a new Ron Howard documentary, *The Beatles: Eight Days a Week – The Touring Years*, and a companion album, *The Beatles: Live at the Hollywood Bowl*, with newly mixed live songs from 1964 and ’65. (Disclosure: I wrote liner notes for that record.) McCartney also put out *Pure McCartney*, a set that surveys his solo and Wings work. And in October, he caps his touring year at Desert Trip, the festival where he is appearing with old friends including Bob Dylan, the Stones and Neil Young.

“It’s fossil rock,” McCartney cracks, “but it’s exciting. Definitely gotta ring Neil, say, ‘What do you reckon, man?’”

In his London office, McCartney is surrounded by his roots and history – there is Beatles and Wings memorabilia, and a vintage jukebox loaded with 78s by Fats Domino, Wanda Jackson and Elvis Presley – but he mostly speaks of his songwriting and the stage in the present tense. He dissects his recent collaborations with Kanye West and mentions that he was “looking at

some lyric ideas” for his next album. “I can write all over the place. I’ve got a lot of ideas on the go.”

But the Beatles are always nearby, as a touchstone and renewing memory. “It’s good talking with you,” McCartney says at the end of one session, then recalls an encounter with Lennon a few years after the band broke up. “He hugged me. It was great, because we didn’t normally do that. He said, ‘It’s good to touch.’ I always remembered that – it’s good to touch.”

Why is performing still so vital to you at this point in your life?

This idea of the great little band – it’s quite attractive. A basic unit is at the heart of the music we all love. It’s in the halls of Nashville, the clubs of Liverpool and Hamburg. One of the pleasures for me, when we take our bow at the end of the evening, is there’s five of us.

And I’ve learned some lessons. I used to be terrified of making a mistake. I’ve learned that it’s OK. The audience actually likes it.

What was the last big mistake you made onstage?

I don’t remember the last one. But I had a show in Paris where I started off with the second verse of “Penny Lane” instead of the first. It should have been “a barber showing photographs.” So I thought, “I’ll swap the verses – do verse two, then verse one and we’ll go into the middle bit.” But the band correctly thought, “He skipped verse one – we’ll go into the middle.”

It was a car crash in Penny Lane. I had to go, “Stop, stop. We’ve totally screwed it up. We’re gonna start again.” The audience went wild. A friend, Cilla Black, who just passed away, came to me after the show: “I loved that bit. Do you do it every night?”

Did you have that urge to entertain, to please, as a boy?

I suppose so. If you go into music, it’s very rare that you’re trying something that you don’t care if people like it. It surprises me that there are some people who don’t want to be liked – there are certain people, I’m sure, but I think it’s just an image. It’s the line in “Hey Jude” about being cool and making your world a bit colder.

In the Beatles, I was very much the guy who pushed it. It’s a damn good job I did. No one would have got off their asses to come out from the suburbs into the city to

Senior writer DAVID FRICKE interviewed Cage the Elephant earlier this year.



21st-Century Man

(1) McCartney on tour in Buenos Aires in May. (2) With wife Nancy during Paris Fashion Week in March. (3) With Rihanna and Kanye West in 2015, the year they hit the Top 10 with "FourFiveSeconds." Says McCartney of their collaboration: "The only deal I made with Kanye was if it doesn't work, we won't tell anyone."



"We got 'em sitting down. Now we'll play our stuff." And they liked it.

What is the dynamic in your band? Who challenges you? Can someone say, "We should do it this way"?

It doesn't work like that. That was the Beatles. Wings was less challenged. Now it's kind of understood: "It's your band." What I do to balance that is throw it open when we're rehearsing. Sometimes there's things I don't want to do. But the guys would say, "Gotta do it. This will work."

What have they suggested that worked?
"Golden Slumbers" through "The End" [from *Abbey Road*]. It was a bit of work. I was being lazy. Rusty suggested "Day Tripper." I didn't want to do it because the bass part's very hard. "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite" is the same. Those are the two in the show I didn't want to do. But the guys said it would be great.

At the same time, I'm a dictator. And nobody has a problem with that – I don't think [laughs]. We've been together now longer than the Beatles or Wings. Something's happening right. And I think we get better, because we get simpler.

Can you imagine touring like this at 80? It used to be that doing this at 40 seemed...

Unimaginable – and unseemly. Mind you, when I was 17, there was a guy in John's art school who was 24 – who I felt so sorry for. I grieved for him [laughs]. He was so old.

Doris Day, who I know a little bit, once said to me, "Age is an illusion." I reminded her of it recently – I was wishing her a happy birthday. People say age is a number. It's a big number the older you get. But if it doesn't interfere, I'm not bothered. You can ignore it. That's what I do.

You mentioned the "Let It Be" film. Is there any chance it will ever be rereleased?

I keep thinking we've done it. We've talked about it for so long.

What's the holdup?

I've no bloody idea. I keep bringing it up, and everyone goes, "Yeah, we should do that." The objection should be me. I don't come off well.

It suggests that, with the Beatles' work, you are not as in control of the legacy as people would assume.

Apple [Corps] is a democracy. I'm one of the votes. The Beatles stuff does itself. Someone will say, "Ron Howard is interested in doing a film." I get to say yes or no. My preference is yes – he's good.

Does it have to be a unanimous decision – you, Ringo, Yoko Ono and Olivia Harrison?

Yeah. That's the secret of the Beatles – can't do three to one. During the breakup was when it got screwed up – we did three against one. But now it has to be unanimous. The two girls are Beatles.

Are there things where you automatically say no? And what kind of veto can you have over the Beatles' songs when you don't own the publishing?

We don't have a veto. But we made it clear that we like it to be treated tastefully – "If that's possible, sir." They can be great offers monetarily, but we draw the line on some things, like a gas-guzzling car. I personally wouldn't do McDonald's, just because of my [vegetarian] beliefs.

The *Love* show [in Las Vegas] was nearly that. George knew this Cirque du Soleil guy and took me to see a show. I was blown away. I was sold on the idea [of a Beatles production]. But the climate was, "No, it's sacrosanct. You can't do this. You must not." I went, "Hang on, it's not your music."

make *Let It Be*. The film turned out pretty weird, but it's a good record.

A lot of the things we did in Hamburg were instigated by me, then taken up by the other guys. We worked in this little beer hall where nobody came in. There was a sign that said BEER, 1.50 MARKS or something. You'd see students come in and go, "Ooh, can't afford it." They were looking for something cheaper. So we really had to work. The manager of the place said, "*Mach schau*" ["Make show"]. We used to do "Dance in the Street," the Gene Vincent song. John was actually the one who said, "I'll do this – [claps hands] 'Gonna dance in the street tonight! Hey, yeah, everybody! C'mon, c'mon!'" That started to pull the students. We figured,

People can relate to the Beatles in a very—

Possessive way. We never listened to that. You would get fans who'd want something and you'd go, "No, I'm sorry. I'm eating dinner. You've got to go away." They'd go, "Well, we buy your records." We said, "Stop buying them, if that's the trade-off." We were always like that, Ringo more than anyone. They would come to his house, and he'd go, "Fuck off" and slam the door. He would not have any of it. You have to draw the line. Or your sanity goes.

How would you characterize your relationship with Yoko now?

It's really good, actually. We were kind of threatened [then]. She was sitting on the amps while we were recording. Most bands couldn't handle that. We handled it, but not amazingly well, because we were so tight. We weren't sexist, but girls didn't come to the studio – they tended to leave us to it. When John got with Yoko, she wasn't in the control room or to the side. It was in the middle of the four of us.

Yet you contributed that quote on the cover of John and Yoko's "Two Virgins" album ("When two great saints meet, it is a humbling experience").

My big awakening was, if John loves this woman, that's gotta be right. I realized any resistance was something I had to overcome. It was a little hard at first. Gradually, we did. Now it's like we're mates. I like Yoko. [Laughs] She's so Yoko.

How often do the four of you meet to discuss Beatles affairs?

Not often. I see Ringo a lot, because he's a lovely boy. We all see each other socially, go to parties. As for meetings, I'm a bit detached from it. I went off Apple during the heavy breakup period – I sent John Eastman in and said, "You tell me what everyone is saying, because I can't bear to be sitting at that table." It was too painful, like seeing the death of your favorite pet.

The way it works now, I listen to all the records. I will be in on the approval process. But most of the work for the Beatles has been done.

Is there anything left in the vaults that is worth releasing?

That's the question: Is it worthwhile? The thing about the Beatles – they were a damn hot little band. No matter what you hear, even stuff that we thought was really bad – it doesn't sound so bad now. Because it's the Beatles.

Could you do something with the raw tapes from the White Album or "Sgt. Pepper," telling the story behind those albums

the way Bob Dylan released his 1965-66 sessions as a box set last year?

The talk between the takes – I've always loved that. We always had this two-track tape recorder running in case we came up with a little jam. "Take 36, what was that like?" But it was actually a chronicle of our dialogue. There's one bit I particularly liked: We were doing "I Saw Her Standing There." I went, "I can't do it. I haven't got my plec." We didn't call them guitar picks, we called them plectrums. John said, "Where is it?" – this in our thick Liverpool accents. "I think I left it in my suitcase." John goes, "Ah, soft ass." "Soft ass? I'll give you a soft ass."

That's very schoolyard.

The Beatles became more worldly. But it's nice to see the school stuff, the banner. To answer your question, is there any more? There's a few things. Is it worth-

"I do albums and, like a fool, I listen to what people say about them. The terrible thing is it puts you off your own stuff."

while? I don't know.

Would you ever consider doing a tour with Ringo?

It's never come up. We come together for things like the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But to actually tour together – leave well enough alone.

Too many wrong signals, like "Beatles reunion"?

I don't think either of us have ever thought why do it, or why not. It's just that our roads are parallel, with intersections and diversions. He's a great drummer, man. That's the thing about Ringo. He has a feel that nobody else has. As to going out on the road, it might be complicated.

You will be at Desert Trip with the Rolling Stones. What do you see when you go to a Stones show now?

It's a mirage. I see the little band I always knew. You've got Mick, Keith and Charlie, who were always there, and Ronnie – he's earned his Stone-ness. I see a good little rock & roll band – not as good as the Beatles [grins], but good.

What potential did you see in 1963, when you and John gave them "I Wanna Be Your Man" to record? It was the Stones' first Top 20 single in the U.K.

You looked at all of the other bands on the scene. We knew who was no good. We knew who was competition. It paid to know what was going on. We'd hear about the Stones. They played at the Station

Hotel [in London]. We went down to see them one night, just stood in the audience. I remember Mick onstage in a gray jacket doing his hand-clappy thing [claps hands in quick rhythm].

The guy who turned the Beatles down at Decca Records happened to ask George if he knew anyone worth signing. We were friends with them, and I just thought "I Wanna Be Your Man" would be good for them. I knew they did Bo Diddley stuff. And they made a good job of it. And I like to show off, say we gave them their first hit. And we did.

Now great little bands like yours and the Stones play gargantuan venues. Can you imagine touring small halls with just new material? Is that a risk worth taking?

That is no risk. That is attractive. This is one of the things that makes you play great, when you're packed together. We knew that

in the Beatles. We always used to record in Abbey Road, Studio 2. But for "Yer Blues," we were talking about this tightness, this packed-in-a-tin thing. So we got in a little cupboard – a closet that had microphone leads and things, with a drum kit, amps turned to the walls, one mic for John. We did "Yer Blues" live and it was really good.

To do new material – that's taking it one step further. This is what I am saying about the Beatles things – these ideas just arrive. I don't necessarily sit around thinking of them. That's a new idea that's just arrived. You proposed it. And we might take it up.

In "All Day," one of the tracks you did with Kanye West, there is a part that you originally wrote on guitar in 1969 but didn't use at the time. What is the story behind that lick?

Linda and I were having our first baby together, Mary. She was recuperating – I'm sitting around eating chips with my guitar in the clinic, goofing around with it. And there was a picture on the wall that I'd been looking at for days – Picasso, "The Old Guitarist." The guy held the guitar like this [strikes the pose from the painting], and a lightbulb went off in my head: "What chord is that?" It looked like it was two strings. "You know what would be cool? To write a song with only two fingers." So I wrote this thing [plays the melody].

I was telling Kanye this story. I whistled it for him. His engineer was recording it, and it went into the pool of ingredients. Kanye was just collecting things. We weren't going to sit down and write a song so much as talk and spark ideas off each

Hall of Famers

Right: With Ringo at a rehearsal for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ceremony last year and (below) with Yoko in 2012. "My big awakening was, if John loves this woman, that's gotta be right," McCartney says. "It was a little hard at first, but now we're mates. She's so Yoko."



other. It was only when I got this song, the Rihanna record ["FourFiveSeconds"] and "Only One," the three tracks we did, that I went, "I get it. He's taken my little whistle-y thing." It returned to me as an urban hip-hop riff. I love that record.

Did you feel like a true collaborator or a sideman? You're used to running a session, seeing a song all the way through.

We had a few afternoons at the Beverly Hills Hotel. The only deal I made with Kanye was that if it doesn't work, we won't tell anyone. I didn't know his system. I'd heard things like, "He's got a room full of guys working on riffs, and he walks around going, 'I like that one.'" It reminded me of Andy Warhol, these artists who use students to paint their backgrounds and things. It's a well-used technique. I thought, "I don't know how I'm going to fit into that, but let's see. Here goes nothing."

Do you think Kanye is a genius?

I don't throw that word around [laughs]. I think he's a great artist. Take *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*. I played it when I was cooking, and it was like, "This is good. There's some really innovative stuff." When the word came from his people, through my people [laughs], I thought, "Let's give it a go."

Do you listen to much hip-hop for pleasure? Or to keep up?

I listen to it for, you could call it, education. I hear a lot of it and go to concerts oc-

casionally. I went to see Jay Z and Kanye when they toured. I've seen Drake live. It's the music of now.

Does it feel as important to you in this era as the music you made in 1966 and '67? People often say rock is dead, that it's had its moment as a historical force.

Time will tell if it's as good. That's not for me to say. But I think it's exciting. You go to a club and hear a great hip-hop record – it definitely does the business. I wouldn't want to critique it versus "A Day in the Life." For me, it's like reggae in that I wouldn't particularly feel I could do it. I would leave that to Bob Marley, to the people that *are* it. It's the same with hip-hop. It was exciting to work with Kanye, to have a contribution to "All Day." [Smiles] It's the best riff on the record.

In your work with younger artists like Kanye or Dave Grohl, do you feel the challenge that you had within the Beatles, especially from John? Has that ever been replaced in any way?

No. I don't think it could be. At some point, you have to realize, some things just can't be. John and me, we were kids growing up together, in the same environment with the same influences: He knows the records I know, I know the records he knows. You're writing your first little innocent songs together. Then you're writing something that gets recorded. Each year goes by, and you get the cooler clothes.

Then you write the cooler song to go with the cooler clothes. We were on the same escalator – on the same step of the escalator, all the way. It's irreplaceable – that time, friendship and bonding.

Are there people you can turn to now for advice about a new song or album?

In music, no. I rely on the experience and knowledge of what would have happened if I'd brought it to the Beatles. That is the best gauge.

What about life in general?

I have some very good friends. Lorne Michaels and I are pretty close. I can always go for a drink with him – we can talk pretty genuinely. I have relatives, my brother and my wife. Nancy is very strong that way. But music, no. It's very difficult. You can't top John. And John couldn't top Paul.

Your last studio album, "New," was a musically upbeat, emotionally positive record. But it came after a few albums that were much darker, even sadder, like "Chaos and Creation in the Backyard." Was it hard to write songs after Linda's death and during the personal difficulties that followed? [McCartney divorced his second wife, Heather Mills, in 2008.]

The thing about *New* was Nancy. That's who was new. It was a good awakening. It made me want to write positive songs. Music is like a psychiatrist. You can tell your guitar things that you can't tell people. And it will answer you with things people can't tell you. But there's a value to sad songs. Something bad happens – you don't want to repress it. So you unload it on yourself, with a guitar. I've got a couple on my next album which are a bit – [makes a shocked look]. But it works, because with songs, you can do that. That's the blues, where you put stuff.

Your youngest daughter, Beatrice, is turning 13 this year. How aware is she of your history?

It's a funny thing with your kids. "OK, Dad is famous – boring." It doesn't go much beyond that. If they come to a concert, it's like, "Oh, I liked 'Back in the U.S.S.R.'" Or "What was that song?" "It's called 'All My Loving.'" "I liked that one." As they get older, it dawns on them. When they go to college, their friends will say, "I like *Ram*." "What's that?" "It's your dad's album."

What is your daily regimen as a father when you're not on tour?

My kids are grown up except the youngest, and that is half the time, because it's a custody situation. I try to be full-on. I get up in the morning and make her breakfast, drive to school. I check in with the teachers, see how it's going. I donate the prize at the silent auction. It's straightforward dad stuff. At the end of that period, I get on a plane, come to America and be a rock star.

How hard was it to balance your music and fame when you and [Cont. on 57]

WAS

Pop's most fascinating radical just wants to release her new album and then retire in peace. So why are so many people so mad at her?

I'M INTERESTED IN WHY I always seem to press the button," says M.I.A. "Everyone knows that pressing buttons is bad. You press a button and you get punished." It's a sparkling July morning, and she's drinking coffee in London's Hyde Park, dressed in a forest-green sweater dress and matching dark-green shades. It happens to be her 41st birthday, but M.I.A., who was born Mathangi Arulpragasam but goes by Maya, says she doesn't care about birthdays. Instead, what's on

PERMANENT REVOLUTION

BY LIZZY GOODMAN | PHOTOGRAPH BY NADAV KANDER



her mind is her seemingly endless ability to stir up trouble.

In recent years, M.I.A. has managed to piss off both the NFL (which sued her for \$16.6 million for flipping the bird as Madonna's guest at the 2012 Super Bowl halftime show; the case was settled for an undisclosed amount) and the U.S. State Department, which right now is denying her a visa to enter the country. Maya, who was born in London to Sri Lankan parents, has a seven-year-old son, Ikhyd, whose father – Maya's ex – is the American entrepreneur and environmentalist Benjamin Bronfman. And yet she still can't get a visa, quite possibly because she has been pegged in the past as a supporter of the Tamil Tigers, a Sri Lankan separatist group that the U.S. says is a terrorist organization. (Maya denies supporting the Tigers, though she has been an outspoken advocate for Sri Lanka's oppressed Tamil minority.) "They never tell you 'no,' and they never tell you 'yes,'" she says of the visa process. "[They] just keep saying they're investigating me."

In April, M.I.A. came under fire for comments that were perceived as dismissive of Black Lives Matter – and, perhaps more problematically for M.I.A., dismissive of Beyoncé. "It's interesting that in America the problem you're allowed to talk about is Black Lives Matter," she told the *Evening Standard*. "Is Beyoncé or Kendrick Lamar going to say Muslim Lives Matter or Syrian Lives Matter?" Maya later clarified her position: "My criticism wasn't about Beyoncé," she said in a tweet. "It's how u can say A not B right now in 2016." But in the wake of the controversy, M.I.A. lost her headlining spot at London's upcoming Afropunk festival.

Now, Maya says that all she wants in the world is to put out her new album, *AIM*, in peace, then walk away from the music business. "I'm really fucking tired and I want to fucking retire and raise my kid," she says. If this is truly her last album, she's going out with a hard left turn. *AIM* is lighter, airier and less overtly political than what she's known for; Maya calls it "the most positive album. There's none of these hot topics – no racism, no gender stuff, no politics. It's going to be an interesting journey for me, this spreading love." She smirks. "I'm trying hard not to sound like Madonna." Blaqstarr, her friend and frequent producer, says Maya has a softer side the public rarely gets to see. "[She's perceived as] very *La Femme Nikita*," he says. "But underneath that armor there's the urge to be a motherly figure."

Maya has apparently even made up with her ex-boyfriend and former collaborator Diplo, with whom she had frequent-

ly exchanged barbs in the press. Last year, shortly after calling him "controlling" and saying he "couldn't wait to be Taylor Swift's best friend," she posted a photo in which she embraces the producer, who even remixed a song from *AIM*.

Still, Maya knows there will always be buttons waiting to be pushed. "Even if I said to you, 'I'm going to stay in this park and build a little tent and just live like a yogi here for 30 years,' I would find it," she says. "I end up in the eye of the storm all the fucking time! I don't know how. I'm dealing with that now. Like: Why, why, why? I'm going to have to really change my life to know the answer."



AT THE START OF M.I.A.'S CAREER, her rebel attitude was perhaps her greatest asset. "It was the 'axis of evil' and blah, blah, blah," she says of her rise to fame in the early 2000s. "That's the reason I came up, because I wasn't afraid." She crashed onto the scene in 2005 with *Arular*, which had a global hip-hop sound and sensibility that connected the struggles of young kids in Compton with oppressed people in developing countries. Creatively, her direct descendants are subversive pop stars like Grimes and Santigold, but in a larger sense, she helped create our current moment of pop activism, paving the way for everything from Nicki Minaj's unapologetic feminism to Beyoncé's "Formation." "I'm not the person that makes billions of dollars off talking about oppression," she says. "I'm the icebreaker and you come in behind me and monetize that shit."

M.I.A. recorded her second album, 2007's *Kala*, essentially on the run. She had planned to work mostly with Timbaland in the States, but visa problems forced her instead to work with producers in studios from India to Angola to Australia. Out of the globe-trotting chaos came a surprise hit: "Paper Planes," a shot at immigrant-fearing Westerners that M.I.A. co-wrote with Diplo. It hit Number Four on the Hot 100, helped along by being featured in Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* and the trailer to the Seth Rogen-James Franco comedy *Pineapple Express*.

Around that time, Maya split with Diplo and met Bronfman, whose family ran the Seagram Co., and whose father, Edgar

Bronfman Jr., had served as CEO of Warner Music Group. M.I.A. was nominated for an Oscar, toured with Björk and wrote for Christina Aguilera. By February 2009, she was nine months pregnant with Ikhyd, but that didn't stop her from performing with Jay Z, T.I., Lil Wayne and Kanye West at the 2009 Grammys. It seemed the singer-rapper was poised to become a superstar – or, as she puts it, a "supermegaconglomerate brand. I had a massive platform in front of me to be like, 'You are gonna be the icon of the fuckin' millennium – embrace it.'"

Instead, she pushed the button. She began to speak about what then seemed like paranoid conspiracy theories, like how the Internet had become a tool for governments to spy on their citizens. She told a journalist that Google and Facebook were developed by the CIA and tweeted that President Obama should give back his Nobel Peace Prize. When *The New York Times* ran a profile painting M.I.A. – unfairly, arguably – as a hypocrite for claiming to represent the underprivileged while living with the son of a billionaire, she retaliated by tweeting the writer's phone number and releasing her own recordings of the interview. Her next album, 2010's *Maya*, was brilliant but abrasive, full of industrial beats and electro-punk noise. For its lead single, "Born Free," M.I.A.

made a video in which a cherubic red-haired kid gets shot in the head.

At times, Maya says, it seems like "I don't even know what I'm saying, it's just coming out and I can't stop it." But she does remember what was primarily on her mind around *Maya*: the Sri Lankan civil war, which was coming to a brutal end. Maya's family belongs to the country's Tamil minority; her father was initially part of a separatist group, but later served as a peace mediator between the government and the Tamil Tigers. "My family, my dad, started a war that lasted 35 fucking years," says M.I.A., who throughout her life has rarely seen her father. "I was really unhappy about how it went down for Tam-

ils. And I had no help and nobody cared."

Maya peaked at Number Nine on the album charts, then quickly sank from view. This time, there were no surprise hits. "I got told, 'You could have been Rihanna if you'd just shut up,'" Maya says, summing up the aftermath of "Paper Planes." "And I was just like, 'Well, I have to stay true to myself. I'll take myself out of the game.' And I did."

**"I WAS
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Controversy Magnet

(1) Flipping the bird at the 2012 Super Bowl, for which the NFL later sued her. (2) With her son, Ikhyd, in 2014. (3) Visiting New York with friends in 1997.



"I DON'T KNOW HOW I'M GOING TO MAKE it through an interview right now," Maya says. It's late morning the next day, and she's sitting at an upscale breakfast spot, feeling like death. She may not like celebrating her birthday, but her friends sure do. Last night, they took her to a Peruvian restaurant where she drank innumerable tiger's-milk cocktails. "That's right, bitches!" she shouts, raising a fluorescent-orange manicured hand after recalling the name of the drink. (Some part of her appears to still be at the bar.)

Before she went out last night, she says, "something really beautiful happened." She unlocks her iPhone to display a photo of a giant bird that flew into her house and has not yet left. "I was going to have eggs, but I don't want to have anything bird-y, out of respect," she says solemnly. Maya orders avocado toast and a fruit salad, then leans back in her seat and smiles. "My kid, I FaceTimed him," she begins. Ikhyd is in New York right now. (She and Bronfman appear to share custody.) When they spoke, she showed him the bird flying around his room. "He was like, 'Yeah, you should cook it.'" She cackles proudly. "He's like, 'What are you waiting for? Stab it and eat it!'"

It's unclear when she broke up with Bronfman, but by the end of 2010, she got

on a plane for London and never really came back. "I had a baby at that point," she recalls. "I needed my mum." It's been a contentious split – in 2013, Bronfman filed a restraining order against Maya to keep her from taking Ikhyd to the U.K., which we know because she chose to tweet about it.

Being the mother of a child of privilege has been weird for Maya, who moved to Sri Lanka from London at six months old and grew up seeing government forces beat her pregnant mother, among other horrors. Her first instinct was to try to toughen up Ikhyd by re-creating some of the circumstances of her youth. "I was giving him bread with butter every day for a week, and he's like, 'You don't have to eat like that. You are, like, a musician pop star.'"

She sees her son as an insider in a way she never had the chance to be. Even in Sri Lanka, ostensibly her homeland, she never got to be "normal," she says. Thanks to her father's activism, there was always an adversary in the midst. "I was in the most

hunted political family. You're reminded as soon as you're born: Somebody is going to kill you."

When Maya was 10, she and her siblings returned to England with their mother. As a member of one of a handful of brown families in her South London council estate, Maya was either spat at in the streets or treated as invisible. "It's not even racism, it's beyond that," she says. "You are just not there."

Maya takes me on a driving tour through East London, where she spent her teenage years going to raves and hanging out with members of a Bengali street gang. "If we'd been here when I was 15," she says, gesturing at the well-heeled, artsy, mostly white people walking around a recently gentrified neighborhood, "all of these people would have got murdered." As a teen, Maya turned her outsider status into an asset. "Me and my sister," she says, "we'd go to the Jamaican community, the Pakistani community, the Indian community. When I started making music, I was like, 'Yeah, all of these people are important, and they're important to my story.'"

Since moving back to London, she's tried to stay under the radar. She's rarely recognized, she says, though other kids at Ikhyd's school expect her to look like a pop star. "The kids really comment on the way I dress," she says. "Like, if I'm not doing my bit to look like the thing, they complain!"

Maya sometimes talks about *AIM* like she's recorded 12 "Kumbaya" covers. But it's true that the firebrand of the past is now in a more conciliatory place – even in "Ola No Visa," she insists, "I'm a fighter and a lover... I ain't really lookin' for no drama." "I can and have preached a lot of hate. I have every right to," she says. "It's just... I can't back that as a thing. Because it's not the truth." Maya doesn't want to empower those who would see her as a dangerous immigrant. "Refugees are still faceless, they still don't have a voice," she says. "They're still at the bottom of the ladder."

Maya isn't sure what she's going to do after *AIM* comes out. The week after we meet, she heads to Greece to work with refugees, and she talks of returning to filmmaking, which she studied in school. Maya would like to take one last stab at America – if she can get into the country, that is. "By the time I get [my visa], Trump's gonna be in power," she half-jokes.

In a way, whatever happens with *AIM* is gravy. Our tour of East London takes us close to the Christ Church Spitalfields youth center, where Maya hung out as a teen. A worker there once pulled her aside with a warning: "He said, 'You need to get the fuck out of here. If you do stay with this, you're going to end up in a council flat with six kids before you're 21.'" Her response? "That sounds *amazing*. Who wouldn't want that? I could be dead." **2**

The Hit Man Next Door

Did an all-American gymnastics coach from New Jersey kill for the Mob, or get lost in his own criminal fantasy? *By* David Kushner

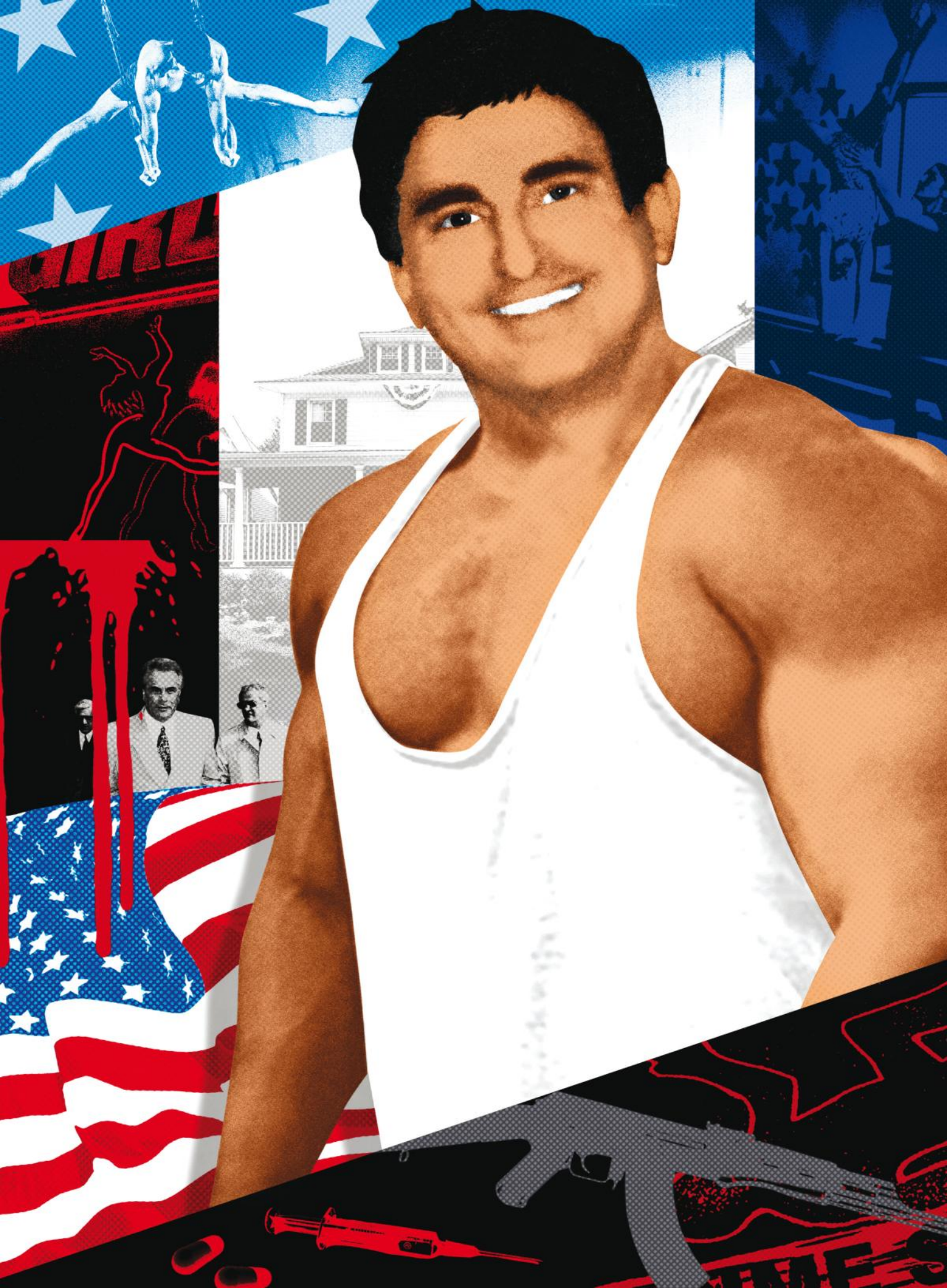
a Greek-American who owned strip clubs and restaurants throughout the state. "Thirty for the three," Passalaqua said. "I need cash, half upfront." He also asked Kontos to supply the weapon, "a .357 or a .40-caliber, has to be a revolver. And if you can, get hollow-points." When Kontos asked how soon the hit could be done, Passalaqua told him, "Within two weeks, maybe sooner."

Six months earlier, on St. Patrick's Day, two masked men with guns had stormed into Kontos' high-end steakhouse in Woodbridge, zip-tied two employees and held a gun to the head of Kontos' 25-year-old son and co-owner, Maik, as he handed over about \$150,000 in cash from the restaurant's safe. Passalaqua had approached Kontos, telling him he knew who did it, and offered to murder the burglars. He wore a gold St. Michael pendant around his neck, a symbol of his righteous vigilantism. In more than 30 years as an enforcer and hit man, he claimed, including a stint collecting debts for legendary mobster John Gotti, he only targeted criminals. "I only do things if I think it's right," he told Kontos. "I've turned away thousands of jobs. I have 103 of these that I've done in my life. One hundred and three. It's got to be something personal like this, where somebody did something bad to somebody that the police can't help them. The police give people like me business because they're incompetent."

But if Passalaqua was a seasoned hit man, he was leading a surprising double life: as a former Olympic hopeful and 30-year owner of a family-friendly gymnastics center for youth tumbling teams and cheerleaders. At his trial in 2011, Judge Faith S. Hochberg told him, "How one man could take such gifts that you have and were

THE MURDER-FOR-HIRE DEAL WENT DOWN inside the Edison Diner, a small red-brick eatery off Route 1 in New Jersey, on September 13th, 2009. Joe Passalaqua, a dark-haired 54-year-old with arms as thick as his Long Island accent, scribbled "\$30,000" on a piece of paper and slipped it across the table to Chris Kontos,

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN RITTER



born with and turn them into such human wreckage is almost unfathomable.”

Today, as he sits behind bars in a federal prison in Maryland, his hair is long, his beard graying, his voice raspy and weary. He knows some friends, family and former students still wonder how a pillar of their community could also have been, as Passalacqua claims, a contract killer in an underworld of drugs, strippers and Mob bosses. With little evidence to substantiate his most elaborate tales, including the “103 kills,” one judge described it all as little more than “criminal fantasy,” but Passalacqua maintains he committed far worse crimes than the handful that got him locked away. Over many interviews, he was calm and reflective, and never once demurred, characterizing his past with a mix of bravado and shame. “I just became an animal,” he tells me. “There’s nothing more addictive than power.”

PASSALACQUA GREW UP IN A middle-class suburb on Long Island in the 1960s. His father owned a successful exterminator business, and his mother was a Sunday-school teacher. According to his aunt, Patricia Ametrano, he was “very skinny” and often terrorized by a gang of older kids at school. “I was definitely not a bully,” Passalacqua says. “I looked like Olive Oyl.”

Around the sixth grade, he watched a gymnastics competition on TV and decided to transform himself into one of the muscle-bound athletes. He eventually became a specialist on the rings – he could hold the iron cross, steady and still with outstretched arms, longer than anyone in his district. He earned a scholarship to Temple University, home to one of the country’s fiercest squads, and became co-captain and league finalist. For Passalacqua, the solitary nature of the sport, which pitted him as much against himself as others, suited his temperament. “I always liked to stand alone,” he says. “I never liked to have to lean on anybody else for success.”

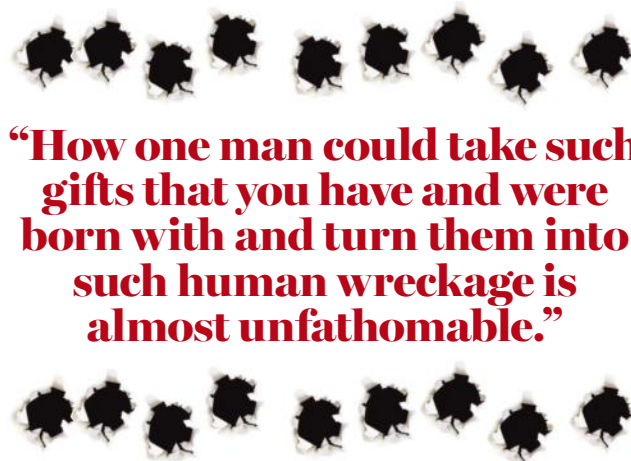
Passalacqua says that his Olympic dreams were dashed during his senior year, when he broke his wrist doing a double backflip. He turned to coaching after graduation, opening his own school, Flip Over Gymnastics, in an East Brunswick, New Jersey, industrial park. Holly Baumgartner, who began taking classes there at age five, recalls Passalacqua as a compassionate disciplinarian who comforted her when she fell with his adage “Progress, not perfection.”

Contributing editor DAVID KUSHNER wrote about Oculus Rift in June.

“He wasn’t just a coach to me,” she says. “Joe was like family.”

The Jersey moms admired Passalacqua (who’d divorced after a short marriage to a Temple University classics professor) not only as a devoted coach, but as charming eye candy. “Joe was an exceedingly good-looking man,” recalls Karen Baumgartner, Holly’s mother, who regarded Passalacqua like a brother. “He had a commanding presence.” He also had a big heart. When Baumgartner could no longer afford classes for her daughter, Passalacqua gave her a secretarial job at the gym to cover her costs.

Passalacqua settled into a successful suburban life. He married a Flip Over gymnastics instructor, Cherie, with whom he had three kids. His only son, Joseph “Joey” Passalacqua IV, recounts fond memories growing up around the gymnastics club.



“How one man could take such gifts that you have and were born with and turn them into such human wreckage is almost unfathomable.”

But even as a young boy, he knew there was a darker side to his father too.

When he was around 12, Joey remembers, he was riding in his dad’s black Hummer when another driver cut them off. Passalacqua sped up and peeled sideways around the offending car, forcing it to pull over to the side of the road. Joey watched as his father ripped the guy from the driver’s seat and began pummeling him into a pulp on the pavement. It wouldn’t be the last fit of road rage. “I can remember countless times of him beating someone up on the side of the road,” Joey says. “He was in tremendous shape and he was very respected, but at the same time, he fit the part of being more than what he appeared to be.”

THE STEROIDS,” HIS aunt recalls with a sigh, “that’s when he became a different person.” In the mid-Eighties, Passalacqua noticed some guys at his gym who worked out less than he did but “looked like fucking King Kong,” and he eventually developed a crippling habit: Deca, testosterone, Primobol, human-growth hormone, Anadrol 50s,

D-Bols, and even some intended for animals, like Equipoise (horses) and Finajet (cows). He would sit alone in a backroom at the gym and use a 13cc horse needle to shoot up in a hip, shoulder or thigh, or around his bellybutton. He recalls occasionally hitting an artery and blood shooting clear across the room. His muscles made his shirts look like children’s clothes. “One of the things about steroids is you never realize you’re as big as you are,” Passalacqua says. “It’s a psychological thing. I never really contemplated the way it was changing my personality and my life.”

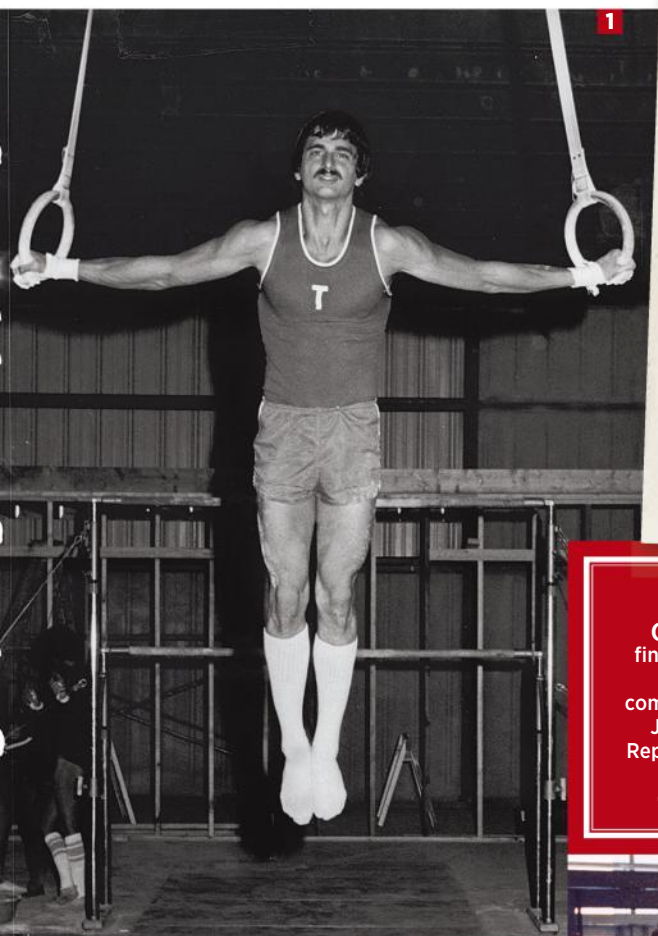
With his testosterone surging, Passalacqua seduced women from strip clubs, bars and his own gym, not seeming to care if his employees walked in on him having sex in his office. “One time, I went into my club,” he says. “My wife is on one StairMaster, my mistress is on another and my girlfriend is on the one next to her.” His son recalls passing his father’s Hummer on the highway – inside, a young woman was straddled over Passalacqua, having sex with him. “He saw me and gave me a thumbs-up,” Joey says with an embarrassed laugh. Passalacqua also became obsessed with martial arts, spending long nights in training, and grew so eager to brawl that he took a side job as a bouncer at a New Jersey disco called Hunka Bunka. “It was a place to fight without legal problems,” he tells me.

“Plus, it was a chickfest.”

People around Flip Over noticed a new level of aggression in their once laid-back coach. When a fight broke out between two trainers, he pinned one up against the wall like a rag doll. “He was very big, very strong and very intimidating,” says a former Flip Over trainer, Blair Gaertner. Though Passalacqua kept his smile on for teams and parents, gym members could sense something simmering. A local priest who worked out at the club says, “I knew just from talking to him that if his anger came out, he would be a very dangerous man.” Baumgartner heard others around the gym referring to her boss as Steroid Joe. But if anyone commented on Passalacqua’s gargantuan size, he would simply joke, “Yeah, I rent myself out as a car jack on weekends.”

In fact, Passalacqua claims, he was spending his time away from the gym as an enforcer for the Mob. His connection came through working on charitable causes for disadvantaged kids with the owner of a number of Italian restaurants around the state. “He wanted to come in and help,” says the restaurateur, who asked not to be named. “That’s the side of Joe I

PREVIOUS PAGE: IMAGES IN ILLUSTRATION COURTESY OF JOSEPH PASSALACQUA; MASTHEAD: SHUTTERSTOCK; STEVE PREZANT/GETTY IMAGES; NINE OK/GETTY IMAGES; DAN CRONIN/NY “DAILY NEWS”/GETTY IMAGES



Hometown Hero
(1) Passalacqua was league finalist on the rings at Temple University, 1977. **(2)** A competitive bodybuilder on the Jersey Shore. **(3)** Active in Republican politics, supporting former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman.



know." According to Passalacqua, the restaurateur also took an interest in his martial-arts skills. In 1987, during a Republican fundraising lunch, Passalacqua says, the restaurateur – who was later indicted as part of an alleged drug-dealing operation run by the Nicodemo Scarfo organized-crime family (the charges were later dropped) – told him there was someone he should meet. Passalacqua says it ended up being the head of the Gambino crime family, John Gotti.

The meeting took place one bright afternoon at a social club in New York's Little Italy, Passalacqua says, where he found the Dapper Don in a stylish suit, seated behind a large wooden desk, flanked by two large goons. "What makes you so special?" he says Gotti asked.

"I can put those two guys in intensive care in less than 10 seconds," Passalacqua replied, nodding at Gotti's bodyguards.

Gotti laughed and said, "You're pretty sure of yourself."

"No," Passalacqua responded, "I just know what I'm capable of."

Gotti then explained that he needed someone "to collect money," Passalacqua recalls. "I'd have to use brutal force, which I had no problem with at that time in my life." If Passalacqua failed, Gotti told him, he'd pay with his life. "I didn't take it as

a threat," he says. "It was something I accepted before I agreed to meet him." Gotti then asked what he wanted his nickname to be. "Angel," Passalacqua said. It was part of his rationalization, an avenging angel going after criminals and mobsters. "I had a warped sense of morality," he says.

HIS STORIES OF THE next five years of his life seem ripped from the pages of a Mario Puzo novel: stalking mansions in night-vision goggles and pummeling the coke-snorting debtor inside; protecting Gotti during a secret visit with cartels; watching a friend take a bullet to the head. From nine at night until five in the morning, he says, he'd be out in the city, cavorting with strippers and thugs as Angel, then racing against the dawn in his red Lotus back to

New Jersey. When he arrived at the gym, he would trade his black Versace suit for baggy sweats and a red Flip Over muscle shirt. By the time he hit the mats, he was once again beloved Coach Joe.

Others close to Passalacqua attest to suspicious activities that support his claims. Gaertner, the Flip Over trainer, says he was having lunch with Passalacqua in the late 1980s at the Seville Diner in Sayreville, New Jersey, when he saw Gotti approach his boss outside. "It was him," Gaertner says. "There's no doubt in my mind." Another time, he says, cops showed up at Flip Over searching for weapons, though he "knew better" than to press Passalacqua for details.

Baumgartner says she began fielding calls from gruff men who would demand to speak with Passalacqua but not leave a number. Despite their close relationship, she too was uncomfortable confronting him about it. "He always had that aura where you didn't want to overstep your bounds," she says.

Passalacqua's son says their lavish lifestyle seemed far beyond the wages of a gymnastics-club owner. Passalacqua moved his family into a sprawling two-story house on a manicured cul-de-sac and collected a fleet of exotic sports cars – Lotuses, high-end Mercedes and Hummers. He installed an elaborate security system with motion detectors around the house and glaring spotlights over the yard. He also competed in underground cage-fighting matches, which he videotaped and proudly showed to his son.

One night, according to Joey, Passalacqua came home with a bullet wound in his leg and treated the gash with foaming hydrogen peroxide. There was also a safe the size of a refrigerator in the basement that "was just full of guns," Joey says, though his mother denies this. He never felt that his dad was trying to recruit him into a life of crime – it was more about sharing parts of his world. "I think Dad wanted to be everything," Joey says. "He wanted to be good, and bad."

In 1989, Passalacqua claims, he became a made man in the presence of Gotti and Sammy "The Bull" Gravano. "It let me understand that this really was for real," Passalacqua says. He is calm and consistent in his recollections, claiming he continued his side work for Gotti up until the Mob boss's incarceration in 1992. But federal agents and former mobsters alike say there is no evidence to support his alleged Gambino ties.

The Italian restaurateur completely denies Passalacqua's account. "Whatever is

said has to be proven," he says. "That's how I live in my universe." J. Bruce Mouw, the retired FBI agent who led the agency's investigation of the Gambino family, tells me, "There wasn't much we didn't know about Gotti by the time we put him away, and I never heard of this guy before." Neither has John Alite, a former Gotti hit-man-turned-government-informant. "What this guy is saying is just not feasible," Alite says. But after seeing an old photo of a massive Passalacqua in his Flip Over muscle shirt and St. Michael necklace, Alite adds with a laugh, "He certainly looks the part."

Passalacqua says it is easy to explain why others didn't know about him, albeit conveniently so: They weren't supposed to. He was brought on specifically to help Gotti explore a burgeoning interest in the drug trade, he says, which was still somewhat *verboten* in the Gambino family. Gotti wanted someone outside the fold to provide necessary muscle. "I was like a phantom," Passalacqua says. "John had people like me up until the day he went to prison because he couldn't trust the people he was around."

Regardless of whether his Mob ties were real or imagined, Passalacqua fashioned himself as the ultimate Jersey hero. Flip Over, with more than a thousand students, had become a renowned farm of talent. There was the U.S. Girls Gymnastics Team; a wrestling squad and karate classes; a Paralympic weight lifter who pressed triple his body weight despite having spina bifida; and a champion cheerleading squad called the Jersey Knights. "He produced a lot of good kids," says Karen Drew, a former tumbling coach at Flip Over. "He was one of the best bosses of my life."

With his smiling face and sharply cut mullet, he put his steroid-sculpted body to use as a professional bodybuilder, winning the Muscle Beach Championship on the Jersey Shore, and – by benching twice his weight, more than 425 pounds – making the Bench Press Weight Lifting nationals. He divorced his second wife and married Miss New Jersey herself, Michelle Graci, a stunning brunette who soon coached the cheerleaders at Flip Over (Graci declined to comment for the story). Passalacqua ran on the Republican ticket for Middlesex Township Council, donated to Republican campaigns and framed a photo of himself with former New Jersey Gov. Christine Todd Whitman.

One day in 2005, his longtime friend and secretary, Karen Baumgartner, walked into Flip Over, past the girls on the tumbling mats, the moms on the elliptical

machines, the teenagers in the tanning booths, and burst into tears at her desk. "Holly was raped," she told Passalacqua of her 15-year-old daughter, long one of his best gymnasts. Baumgartner watched an icy-cold glare enter her boss's eyes. "If you want me to," he told her, "I'll make sure something is taken care of."

Baumgartner, who'd caught glimpses of Passalacqua's other life for decades, knew he was offering to kill or otherwise severely maim the rapist. For the first time in her presence, he was breaking down the wall between his two worlds. "I had heard rumors he was working with the Mafia," she now admits.

She asked her daughter if she wanted to let Passalacqua get involved. "My mom told me Joe would handle it if I wanted him to,"

the owners of his dealership often cheated customers and deserved to get robbed, Passalacqua agreed.

The crew of four went to the owners' home late one night, and balanced a ladder on the roof of Passalacqua's Hummer to break into a second-floor window. They sped away with a safe that was stuffed with envelopes full of cash. Their total take was \$140,000. "After that," Danise recalls, "we were off to the races."

Over the next two years, they committed at least a dozen burglaries. The jobs often began at strip joints. They'd stake out a known drug dealer raining cash on dancers, and then run his license plate with the help of a dirty cop. Then they'd show up at the guy's house and steal his money. Passalacqua was double the age of the rest of

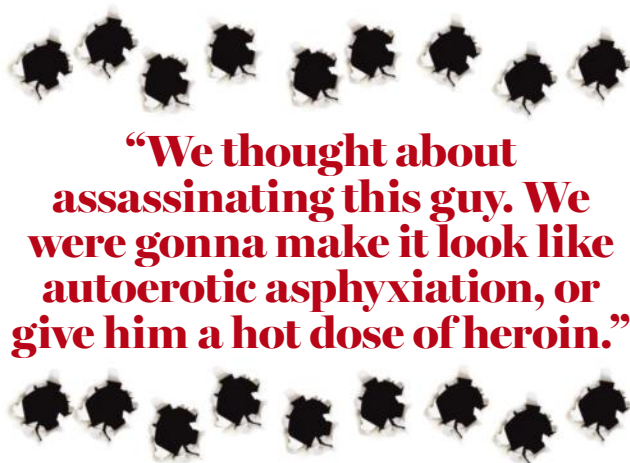
the crew, so he mainly served as the getaway driver. "Cops aren't going to pull over a 55-year-old white guy," Danise explains. In Passalacqua's mind, targeting bad guys meant he was less a hood than a vigilante. "These people were legends in their own mind and detriments to society," he says.

But, as Passalacqua tells it, Danise and the others were soon spinning out of control. At one home invasion, they assaulted the woman inside, and doused her with bleach in an attempt to destroy any trace of DNA evidence. Afterward, Passalacqua chastised them for

using violence against an innocent bystander, but they had little interest in his moralizing. Tensions again rose when the men engineered a robbery of a high-end steakhouse where two of them had previously worked – the one owned by Kontos. "I told them I wanted nothing to do with it," Passalacqua says. "That it was too close to home, and Kontos was a regular businessman who hadn't done anything wrong."

To the crew, Passalacqua was becoming a nuisance. He soon learned from one of them that Danise was leading a charge to take him out – a fact Danise doesn't deny. Danise says he was worried that Passalacqua might flip as an informant or simply turn them in. "We thought about assassinating this guy, and robbing him too," he says of Passalacqua. "We were gonna go in his house, grab his safe and make it look like autoerotic asphyxiation or give him a hot dose of heroin and make it look like suicide."

Passalacqua decided to strike first. When he met with Kontos to make the murder-for-hire deal, he says, he had every intention of going through with it. "I had to get these guys before they got me," he says. "I was going to kill them anyway, so I might as well let Kontos pay me to do it."



recalls Holly, who at one point, on a phone call with her mom, heard her old coach demanding the rapist's details in the background. "I knew how scary he could be. He would not let it up, he wanted to know who this person was and he was going to take care of the rest." In the end, it's unclear what happened to the rapist. Passalacqua will only say, "I couldn't do anything at the time." But it wouldn't be the last occasion he made such an offer.

ONE VERIFIABLE PERIOD of Passalacqua's lawlessness begins in 2007, when he met a crew of criminal weight lifters at a Jersey gym called the Muscle Mill. The recession was on, work was slim and, for Passalacqua, who had moved into a larger and more costly 15,000-square-foot facility, business at Flip Over was struggling. The popularity of gymnastics was on the decline, and Flip Over's bread-and-butter of birthdays and private tumbling classes had taken a hit. "He couldn't pay rent and had a hard time making payroll," Gaertner recalls. When one of the guys from Muscle Mill, Raffaele Danise, a hulking 21-year-old used-car salesman, said

By then, Passalaqua had fallen in love with a young brunette from Texas, who had first dropped by the gym for a sales call. (She asked not to be identified for this story, but agreed to a pseudonym, Julia.) He showered her with money and nights on the town, and sometimes brought along Danise and the others, telling her they were his bodyguards. "At the time, nothing made me suspicious," she says. "I was young, I was wild and I wanted to party."

But Passalaqua didn't keep her in the dark for long. Once they were living together, he confided to her over dinner. "I trust you," he said, "and I want to tell you about what I've done in my past." And so he revealed the alleged secret life that others only suspected or still refuse to believe: the Mob, the crews, the beatings and killings. "I was a little intimidated and a little scared," Julia says, "but he was like, 'That's my past life - I don't do that anymore,' and I believed him."

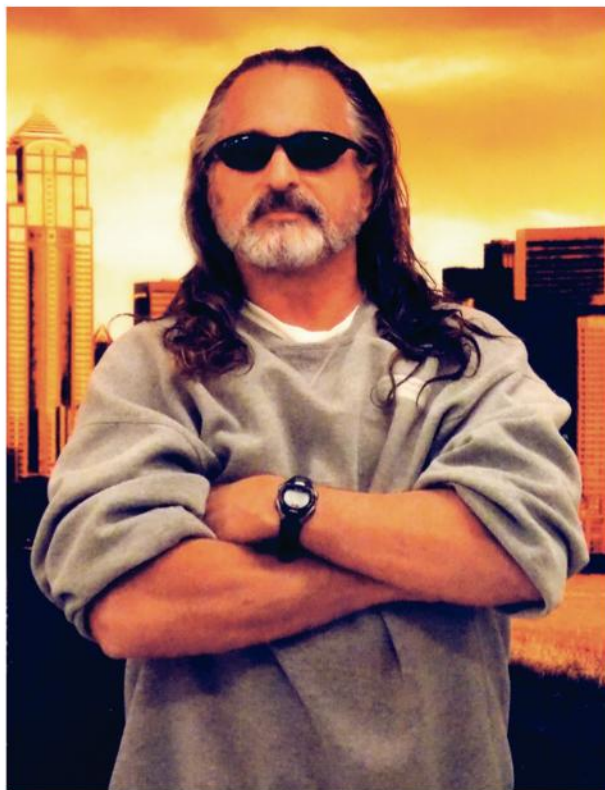
She had been wanting to return to her hometown in Texas, and Passalaqua agreed to sell Flip Over and move with her. When he proposed marriage in August 2009, she said yes. She moved down that month, and in mid-September, he texted her a picture of her engagement ring: a four-carat princess-cut diamond set in a platinum band with stones around it. "He was going to give it to me the next time he came to Texas," she says. But there was something that Passalaqua didn't disclose: He had to finish one last job.

SEPTEMBER 23RD, 2009, began like any other day at Flip Over: kids tumbling, weight lifters benching, moms stretching. After finishing some paperwork around 2 p.m., Passalaqua says, he scribbled a note for Gaertner, telling him he'd be away for a few days, and drove his red Dodge Charger to a Perkins restaurant in Woodbridge. Kontos was waiting in the far end of the parking lot in his black BMW. He seemed nervous, but at first that didn't alarm Passalaqua. "That was normal," Passalaqua says. "He was giving a man \$15,000 to kill three people." Kontos handed him a thick envelope full of cash, and Passalaqua put it straight into his pocket. "Are you going to count it?" Kontos asked.

"No," Passalaqua said calmly. "I would have no problem collecting the balance."

"When will it be done?"
"This weekend."

Before Passalaqua left the car, he noticed some sweat misting on Kontos' face. What had seemed like simple nerves now gave him a more ominous feeling. The mo-



Facing Hard Time

Passalaqua was sentenced to 15 years in a Maryland penitentiary, where he's now a pastor. Asked to verify claims of once being a ruthless killer, he says, "Why would I lie to God?"

ment Passalaqua stepped out of the car, a SWAT team rushed him, throwing him to the ground. A helicopter circled the sky, he says, as cuffs were snapped over his wrists.

When he looked up, he saw FBI agent Carrie Brzezinski, a steely woman with gray hair who'd been working violent crimes in New Jersey for more than two decades. A Middlesex County police detective had contacted her with suspicions that the Kontos case might be tied to a string of unsolved robberies and home invasions in the area, potentially with links to the Mob. At Brzezinski's first meeting with Kontos, he had told her about Passalaqua's offer and agreed to cooperate with the feds, later recording every detail of the murder-for-hire deal.

Now, with Brzezinski staring down at him, Passalaqua says, he tried to play it cool. "Where's Ashton Kutcher?" he joked. "Am I getting Punk'd?"

Passalaqua pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to interfere with commerce by threat or violence for his role in nine burglaries and one armed robbery, and is now five years into a 15-year sentence. Danise and other crew members are serv-

ing similar time. During our many conversations, Passalaqua was quick to disparage his violent past - blaming, in part, his abuse of steroids for fueling his brutality. "I did what I did because I could," he says. "Arrogance combined with ignorance leads you to get worse and worse. All you care about is self-gratification and pleasure. I wanted to be the big shot."

Passalaqua has been largely cut off by those closest to him. His second wife, Cherie, thinks he's a man deeply lost in his own self-aggrandizing mythology. "His ego continues to create a history of himself that did not occur," she tells me. "He has destroyed lives to reach his own level of greatness." For all his childhood suspicions, their son, Joey, who now runs a pair of fitness centers in New Jersey, never imagined his father would become a common thief. "Maybe those people were hardworking people," he tells me. "It is not justified to be able to do that to someone." At the same time, he hasn't lost much affection for the man who raised him, explaining, "Dad was a really good dad."

Despite the elaborate details of his recollections, and being caught on tape boasting about more than 100 killings, the FBI found nothing to tie Passalaqua to past murders or the Mafia.

This raises an obvious question: Why would he continue to insist he was once a ruthless killer? Is he still trying to be the big shot, spinning tales about the one chapter of his life that no one can, or will, corroborate? With a sigh of resignation, Passalaqua answers his doubters with a question of his own: "Why would I lie to God?"

Although he spurned his mother's Sunday-school teachings as a child, he has finally found religion. Of course, he's not content to just sit in the back row of the prison church. He has come to lead the services himself, counseling younger prisoners on the dangers of drugs - especially steroids - and steering clear of the violence that he claims once defined much of his life. When he gets out of prison at age 70, he hopes to have his own congregation, a Flip Over for lost souls. "I sold my soul to the devil when I became Angel," he says. "Now, I'm just Pastor Joe." 

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Reviews

"Two young hearts, one cool car,
And all we wanted to do was
Park, kiss, smoke, drink.
I love this song, baby, what do you think?"
— JAKE OWEN, "American Love"

Can Country's Young Dudes Grow Up?

The hard-partying bros who once owned Nashville adapt to changing times



Florida Georgia Line

Dig Your Roots Big Machine

★★★

The Cadillac Three

Bury Me in My Boots

Big Machine

★★★

Jake Owen

American Love RCA Nashville

★★★½

BY JODY ROSEN

Whither the bro? After a half-decade of radio dominance, country music's party-hearty dudes are loosening their grip on Nashville. Blame (or thank) the rise of tough, smart female stars like Miranda Lambert, Brandy Clark and Maren Morris. Or call it a cyclical thing: Eventually, every rager stalls out in a puddle of stale backwash. In any case, turn on country radio in 2016 and you'll hear bros toning down the talk of trucks and Daisy Dukes, and freshening up their sounds.

Exhibit A is the third album by Florida Georgia Line. It was the duo's debut hit, "Cruise," a simple-minded ode to getting drunk and laid, that announced



Reviews

bro-country's pre-eminence. On *Dig Your Roots*, Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley haven't totally renounced their old ways. ("Ain't no doubt, 'bout to lay you down on a beach towel/ California King style," they sing in "Summerland.") But their music is getting spicier; songs like the hit "H.O.L.Y." and "God, Your Mama, and Me" (featuring the Backstreet Boys) tilt toward pop. And the heart of *Dig Your Roots* isn't Saturday-night revelry, it's Sunday morning; songs about loving God, your dear old dad, your wife and kids, and, on the appealingly burly title track, all of the above.

Hubbard and Kelley turn up in a guest spot on the new album by their labelmates, Nashville trio the Cadillac Three, adding vocals to "The South," a bruising paean to Dixieland. The C3 are Southern rockers in the tradition of Lynyrd Skynyrd – scuzzier than run-of-the-mill country bros. Lead singer Jaren Johnston is a top Nashville writer, but he's a bit too enamored of good-ol'-boy clichés. Luckily, he's an excellent singer; when he wraps his raspy snarl around ballads like "Runnin' Red Lights," your ears prick up.

Jake Owen is far more clean-cut than the C3, but this laid-back every-dude has a secret: He's quirkier than he looks. Over the course of four strong albums, he's shown a nose for superlative Music Row material and production flourishes that nudge pop country in interesting directions. The title track from his fifth (co-written by Johnston) pumps up a teen-romance yarn with R&B brass; other songs deftly stir in disco and funk, synths and Wurlitzer, beats and loops. There's a road song, of course, but Owen isn't singing about steering his pick-up to a beer-bash. The vibe is gypsy-hippie: "Who needs a plan, bring the whole fam/ Load 'em all up in my VW van." Destination: the post-bro era. **C**

LISTEN NOW!

Hear key tracks from these albums at

RollingStone.com/albums.



Gucci Mane's Homecoming Reinvention

The absurdist king of Southern trap rap is back from prison. And it's a new world

Gucci Mane *Everybody Looking* Atlantic ★★ ★ ½



For the past decade, Gucci Mane has been the wild card of Atlanta trap rap – growling singsong, stream-of-consciousness lines like "Gucci Mane crazy I might pull up on a zebra/ Land on top a eagle" over spacious synth-heavy beats on dozens of mixtapes and albums. Where peers like T.I. and Young Jeezy can be self-serious, Gucci is playful, serving as Southern hip-hop's absurdist id and remaking the scene in his own fun-house image.

Everybody Looking, Gucci's ninth album and first after nearly three years in federal prison, is a compelling left turn, deeper and more mature-sounding. This should be a victory lap. But even the flirtatious "Gucci Please" feels claustrophobic. In the past, his gruff, cloudy voice and off-kilter imagery mirrored his wild behavior. Now his voice has a new clarity and force. That doesn't mean his sense of humor is gone ("I only featured Kanye 'cause we both some fuckin' narcissists," Gucci raps on "Pussy Print"). But it's hard to miss that the mood is less freewheeling. "They call me crazy so much, I think I'm starting to believe 'em/I did some things to some people that was downright evil," he raps over Mike Will Made It's moody beat on the urgent "1st Day Out Tha Feds." Gucci's pop appeal has always been at odds with his rap sheet. Now, he's suggesting something darker: an anti-hero in the making.

CHRISTINA LEE



DJ Snake

Encore Interscope ★★ ★ ½

'Turn Down for What' guy's flat DJ extravaganza

On "Ocho Cinco," France's DJ Snake teams up with EU DJ brethren Yellow Claw to unleash pounding beats, evil-chipmunk vocals, cyborg shout-outs and monster belly-dance synths. Sure, it's a retreat of Snake's undeniable hit "Turn Down for What," but it's a hot one. Like most DJ albums, unfortunately, *Encore* does little with its A-list guests. "The Half" feels half-baked considering Jeremih, Young Thug and Swizz Beatz all had a hand in it, and the Bieberized "Let Me Love You" is a slight tropical-house come-on with a "nah-nah-nah" chant that unintentionally suggests a perfect response to this surprisingly flat album. **WILL HERMES**



Dinosaur Jr.

Give a Glimpse of What Yer Not Jagjaguwar ★★ ★ ½

Slacker-rock veterans polish up their influential sludge

Eleven years have passed since slacker-rock trailblazers Dinosaur Jr. re-formed, and the trio's fourth post-reunion outing offers a more polished version of the fuzzy, impressionistic downer sludge they helped pioneer 30 years ago. Frontman J Mascis (now age 50) sounds as world-weary as he did in 1987, delivering one acidic, tempestuous guitar swirl after another. The band's more subdued bassist-singer, Lou Barlow, pitches in with the equally despairing "Love Is..." "I've been crawling around since I met you," Mascis sings on "Mirror," summing up a record where finding happiness would be the only way to break the mood. **KORY GROW**

JONATHAN MANNION



Shura

Nothing's Real Interscope

★★★★½

Eighties-loving alt-pop that revels in missed connections

The debut album from 25-year-old British alt-pop diarist Shura is a tangle of glam and glum. Born in the Nineties and in love with the bubble beats and synth clouds of the Eighties, she builds her music as a glossy shell around detailed dissections of missed connections. "Indecision" nods to Madonna's "Borderline" and confesses an attachment that lingers past its sell-by date. Her videos make clear the subjects of these songs are often women, but on record her work is open-ended – a map to a treasure that's just never there.

JOE LEVY



Nels Cline

Lovers Blue Note ★★★★★½

Wilco guitar swami's instrumental booty call

An update of Fifties "mood music," those chilled-out instrumental soundtracks for wee-small-hours booty calls, *Lovers* is a departure for noise-loving Wilco guitar swami Nels Cline. That's not to say this two-CD set, featuring an all-star orchestra of improvisers, isn't wildly inventive in its watercolored way. Cline reimagines some American-songbook classics, embroidering a string-swaddled "Glad to Be Unhappy." Elsewhere, Sonic Youth's "Snare, Girl" becomes haunted exotica. Minus lyrics, they're reminders that romance has a power beyond words. WILL HERMES



Lori McKenna

The Bird & the Rifle CN

★★★★★

Nashville songwriting pro's vintage Seventies storytelling

Lori McKenna's writing credits include some of country's most emotionally fine-tuned songs: See Brandy Clark's "Three Kids No Husband." But her roots lie in the Massachusetts folk scene, and her own records bypass Music Row for more interesting places. Here, the sound conjures the Seventies singer-songwriter heyday, and McKenna's storytelling is indelible. From the drive-of-shame narrative of "Halfway Home" to the trapped kids of "We Were Cool" listening to "Smells Like Teen Spirit" on tape cassette, these songs wear their regrets proudly. WILL HERMES



Chris Robinson Brotherhood

Anyway You Love, We Know How You Feel Silver Arrow ★★★★★

Former Black Crowes leader gets born again

Ex-Black Crowes frontman Chris Robinson has reinvented himself with a band more musical, soulful and downright fun than his previous brotherhood. Their latest morphs between latter-day Grateful Dead and P-Funk, longer on vibes than songs but confirming their spot on the jam-band top tier. It's good-time music on an end-times mission: When the pedal-steel-gilded "California Hymn" declares, "Let your cup overflow again – glory hallelujah!" it seems churlish not to answer back, "Amen."

WILL HERMES

IT'S LIKE
YOUR TONGUE
CRASHED INTO
A CHOCOLATY,
PEANUTY,
CARAMEL
ICEBERG.



ICE CREAM SATISFACTION

Essential David Bowie

A guide to his best, deepest and most overlooked albums – from glam classics to his majestic final statement. By Rob Sheffield

MUST-HAVES



Hunky Dory

1971

Planet Earth, meet David Bowie. One of him, anyway – even in 1971, the former David Jones had already burned through a few pop disguises, posing as a folkie hippie songbird or a London mod pinup boy. He scored a novelty hit in the summer of 1969, “Space Oddity.” But *Hunky Dory* was the album where he staked his claim as the most altered ego in rock & roll, billing himself as “The Actor” on the back cover while stretching out as a singer, songwriter and all-around mind-freaker. Bowie croons surreal ballads such as “Life on Mars?” and “Quicksand” like a cosmic theater queen. He also steals guitar flash from the Velvet Underground in “Queen Bitch.” Led by Rick Wakeman of English prog-rockers Yes on piano and Mick Ronson on guitar, *Hunky Dory* was a breakthrough hardly anyone noticed – Bowie was so far out, it would take the audience (and rock & roll itself) a while to catch up.



The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars

1972

Bowie got tired of waiting for the world to anoint him as a rock star – so he did it himself, playing the role of a crimson-haired glam messiah from outer space named Ziggy. This concept album finally made him a total blam-blam in his native land. He was flamboyant on a level rock had never seen before, whether he was ranting about hot sex (“Suffragette City”) or morbid alienation (“Five Years”) or both (“Moonage Daydream”). “I’m the last person to pretend I’m a radio,” Bowie said. “I’d rather go out and be a colour television set.”

STATIONTOSTATIONDAVIDBOWIE



Station to Station

1976

Like all 1970s rock stars, Bowie was required to

troop out to L.A. and spend a year or two face-down in a punch bowl of Peruvian flake. Yet unlike most of them, he actually made a great album this way. *Station to Station* has his trippiest epic in the title song, a 10-minute occult robot-funk groove. “TVC15” pairs metal-machine guitars with the piano strut of the E Street Band’s Roy Bittan. For the finale, “Wild Is the Wind,” he nicks a Fifties movie theme he learned from Nina Simone and makes it his own. Bowie confessed he could barely remember making *Station to Station* – but given the dark mental state it depicts, that was probably a lucky break.



Blackstar

2016

Out of the blue, Bowie announced he was dropping *Blackstar* on his 69th birthday. It immediately registered as one of his most powerful musical statements, stretching out in jazzy meditations like “Lazarus” and “Blackstar,” taking inspiration from Kendrick Lamar and D’Angelo. But just two days later, the world was shocked to learn Bowie had been keeping another big secret. His death revealed *Blackstar* as his grand, pained farewell, facing mortality with the

bittersweet “I Can’t Give Everything Away.” An innovator right up to the end.

FURTHER LISTENING



Aladdin Sane

1973

After a year of touring America in his Ziggy persona, Bowie and his music got heavier on *Aladdin Sane*. It has sex, drugs and decadence galore, from the Hollywood teen-junkie-hooker satire “Cracked Actor” to “Watch That Man,” the funniest and kinkiest of Bowie’s many Rolling Stones rips.



Low

1977

Bowie escaped L.A. to start over in Berlin with his new partner in crime, Brian Eno. *Low* was split be-

tween oblique rock blurts and synth instrumentals, with Bowie brooding over what a disaster he’s made of his life in “Always Crashing in the Same Car.” Kicking off his Berlin Trilogy, it remains the most emotionally accurate turning-30 album ever.



Heroes

1977

The second chapter in the Berlin Trilogy sounds completely different, thanks mostly to guitar hero Robert Fripp. The title track became Bowie’s most beloved standard, and “Blackout” is one of his great buried treasures – a pileup of disco bass and guitar murk, as he shrieks, “Get me off the streets!” possibly in response to the notorious New York City blackout of 1977.



Scary Monsters

1980

At the end of the Seventies, Bowie looked back

over a decade he helped define and ripped it into pieces, with futuristic post-punk lampoons like "Fashion" and "Teenage Wildlife." On "Ashes to Ashes," he revisited the Major Tom story, giving his sad astronaut epic a New Romantic update.



Heathen

2002

Bowie ignored any commercial-rock trend circa 2002 – he reconnected with golden-age producer Tony Visconti for an edgy set of guitar-driven meditations on fatherhood and adult romance, like "Sunday" and the majestic "Slip Away," while covering the Pixies and Neil Young.



The Man Who Sold the World

1970

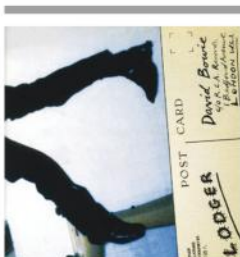
A surprisingly bluesy hard-rock record. The eight-minute "Width of a Circle" is Mick Ronson's guitar-god zenith, and acoustic tales like "All the Madmen" and "After All" are frightening depictions of a mind slipping into insanity.



Young Americans

1975

Bowie high-tailed it to Philadelphia to make a state-of-the-art R&B album. He called it "plastic soul," but he sounds downright sincere, especially in the Stevie Wonder sunshine vibe of "Win."



Lodger

1979

The Berlin Trilogy's underrated final installment, with guitar madman Adrian Belew wreaking havoc all over witty tales of jet-lagged midlife malaise. *Lodger* boasts "Boys Keep Swinging," one of rock's prophetic gender-is-over anthems.



Let's Dance

1983

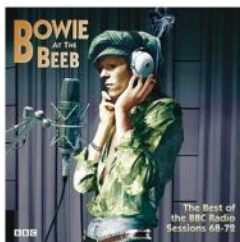
Eighties hitcraft, courtesy of producer Nile Rodgers. Bowie strutted his stuff with a blond pompadour and videos where he put on his red shoes and danced the blues.



Earthling

1997

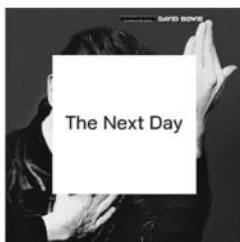
Earthling was marketed as Bowie's drum-and-bass record. But beneath the awful production is a disarmingly passionate LP about marriage, the great topic of his later years.



Bowie at the Beeb

2000

These BBC recordings show what a powerful live performer he was from the beginning; check his fierce 1972 version of "White Light/White Heat," where he brags, "White light make me sound like Lou Reed/White light gonna fill my every need."



The Next Day

2013

Ending a long silence, Bowie released the magnificently moody "Where Are We Now" and an LP of short, punchy songs. It was great to have him back, on whatever terms he chose.

More Stardust

The greatest moments from the rest of Bowie's epic career

"Janine" *Space Oddity* 1969

Young folkie Bowie tries to woo a beatnik lass. This ends with a line Paul Westerberg could have written: "Take your glasses off and don't act so sincere."

"Holy Holy" *Non-LP single* 1971

A glam ode to dazed gnostic egomania. He cut it twice – the keeper is the lean-and-mean second version, from 1974 with the Spiders From Mars.

"See Emily Play" *Pin Ups* 1973

A tribute to one of his early heroes, Pink Floyd's doomed Syd Barrett. It turned Barrett's jauntiest tune into an orchestral psychic meltdown.

"Growing Up and I'm Fine" *Demo* 1973

He donated this perfect piece of girl-group-style pop to Mick Ronson to launch his solo career, which sadly bombed.

"Sweet Thing/Candidate/Sweet Thing (Reprise)" *Diamond Dogs* 1974

A nine-minute suite with an invitation no one could resist: "We'll buy some drugs and watch a band/ Then jump in the river holding hands."

"Tonight" *Tonight* 1984

A glimmer of morbid beauty from a catastrophic album, turning an Iggy Pop death trip into a hideously poignant Tina Turner duet.

"As the World Falls Down"

Labyrinth soundtrack 1986

Bowie's role as a slinky villain in a freaking Muppet movie became an unlikely cornerstone of his legend – with a lovely lament embalmed on the soundtrack.

"No Control" *Outside* 1995

His heavily hyped reunion with Eno was mostly a well-meaning dud, except this synth-pop ode to urban paranoia.

"Thursday's Child"

Hours... 1999

Autumnal soul from a slept-on album; this could be prime Babyface.

"Bring Me the Disco King" *Reality* 2003

Ever wonder how a Bowie-Steely Dan throwdown would have sounded? This eerie eight-minute piano ramble is your answer.

Rob Sheffield's new book, *On Bowie*, is out now.



Circa 1973

By Peter Travers

Suicide Is for Suckers

Suicide Squad

Will Smith, Margot Robbie

Directed by David Ayer



YES, YOU CAN MAKE A COMIC-book movie that's doomsday dark and hotly funny. It's called *Deadpool*. It sure as hell isn't *Suicide Squad*. The putative savior of this bumper summer (*Captain America* excepted) wusses out when it should get down in the mud with the Dirty Dozen of DC Comics. To banish the gloom of *Batman v. Superman*, *Squad* director David Ayer goes candy-assed.

You've never seen a more lovable squad of death-row supervillains. Viola Davis is scarier as Amanda Waller, the ethics-starved fed who releases these killer meta-humans, "the worst of the worst," from prison to defend good folks against alien invasion.

Will Smith gets laughs as Deadshot. But should he? He's playing a heartless assassin. Turns out Smith's Deadshot cares less about getting sprung



Smith and Robbie feel suicidal.

from the slammer than getting his daughter into an Ivy League college. "I need you to 'white people' that thing," he Fresh Princes his captors.

And there's irresistible Margot Robbie as Harley Quinn, a shrink who goes nutso under the spell of the Joker (Jared Leto), the psycho she'd die for. "But would you live for me?" he asks. Leto's cackle really is chilling, but Ayer reduces his role to a glorified walk-on.

The rest of the squad is intro'd with all the resonance of a roll call: Boomerang (Jai Courtney), Killer Croc (Adewale Akinnouye-Agbaje), blah, blah, blah. No one registers.

Who stole the soul of *Suicide Squad*? I'd say Ayer (*Fury*), in his readiness to sell out his hardcore action bona fides for a PG-13 crowd-pleaser that would rather ingratiate than cut deep. This botch job makes *Fantastic Four* look good. **B+**

A New Kind of Western

Hell or High Water

Chris Pine, Ben Foster, Jeff Bridges

Directed by David Mackenzie



CHRIS PINE PROVES HE CAN act. Ben Foster, well, he always could. And Jeff Bridges shows them both new tricks. How's that for three riveting reasons to pony up for *Hell or High Water*? Hot damn, this one's a goodie, a mesmerizing modern-day Western that strikes with the coiled intensity of a rattlesnake. Set in West Texas, this hell-raiser takes surprising turns we don't see coming.



Pine gets gritty.

Tightly directed by David Mackenzie, from a dynamite script by *Sicario*'s Taylor Sheridan, the film starts with a series of bank holdups. Two brothers in masks: Toby (Pine) is focused; Tanner (Foster), a recent parolee, is a loose cannon. The crooks are bankers out to grab the family farm. Sweet irony, paying back fiduciary thieves with their own money.

In pursuit is Bridges as Texas Ranger Marcus Hamilton, an old coot well versed in scams. The Bridges scenes with Pine have a teasing humor imbued with subtle threat. That's in sharp contrast to the electrifying Foster, who swings for the fences. These exceptional performances ground this violent, socially aware film in the real world. So see *Hell or High Water*, and soon. It's that special. **A-**

Seth Rogen Relishes Animated Erotica

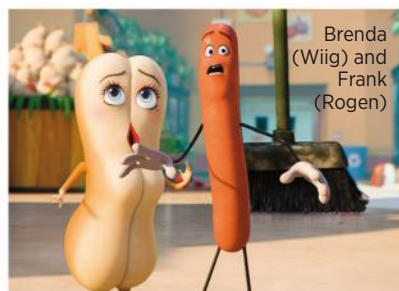
Sausage Party

Seth Rogen, Kristen Wiig

Directed by Greg Tiernan and Conrad Vernon



YOU LEAVE THE FUCKED-UP fun house of *Sausage Party* thinking: Did I see this movie or hallucinate it? I mean that as high praise. Seth Rogen, who wrote the script with Evan Goldberg, Kyle Hunter and Ariel Shaffir, has dreamed for years of dishing out an R-rated cartoon treat that would tackle the crisis in the Middle East, the nonexistence of God and the sex lives of supermar-



Brenda (Wiig) and Frank (Rogen)

ket products. He does it all in *Sausage Party*, as well as voicing Frank, afurter who longs to pull out of his prophylactic packaging and slip into a bun named Brenda (Kristen Wiig). Rogen is a live-wire satirist who's probably taken on too

much. But you gotta love him for it. *Sausage Party* shows us how we are what we eat, drink and buy into. All the products in Rogen's market – the animation is killer – talk four-letter shit but still believe in being purchased and taken to the Great Beyond, a grand illusion the film quickly shatters in scenes of carnage to rival *Saving Private Ryan*. I could go on, but why spoil the mirth and malice? Only a douche would take the kids. They'd be traumatized. **B+**

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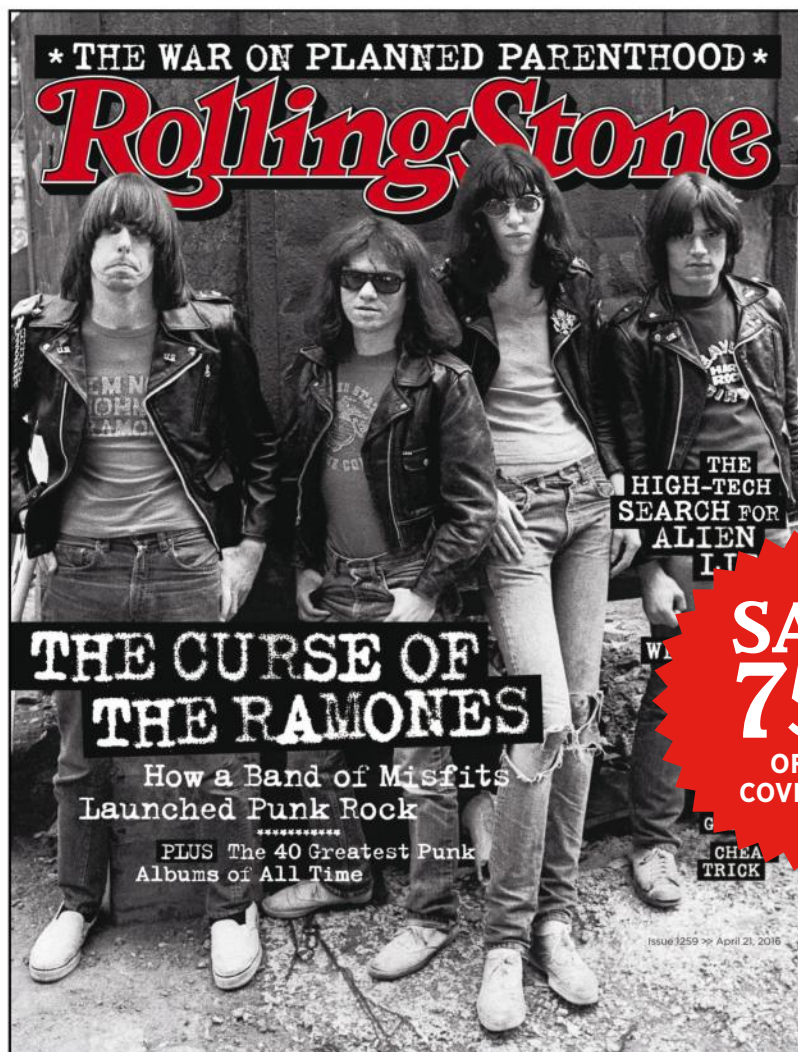
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PAUL MCCARTNEY

[Cont. from 37] *Linda were raising a family in the Seventies on a farm?*

It was more hippie culture. We were kind of home-schooling. I'd teach them to write. I enjoyed that. Once they got to school, we'd take tutors when we went on tour. I'd have to go to the school, find out what they were going to cover – geography, history, math – and organize it as sensibly as I could. We made it work. Linda and I always said, "The main thing is they have good hearts." They all do. They're also pretty smart.

The Beatles' children – yours, Sean and Julian Lennon, Dhani Harrison, Zak Starkey – have turned out strong and sensible, often with their own music careers. How did the biggest band in the world succeed as parents amid that madness?

It's the Liverpool roots. We had strong families. My family was particularly strong. John's aunt was strict, I thought, in a good way. Ringo was an only child, but his mom and dad were great. Growing up in Liverpool, which is very working-class, you can't get above yourself.

My family had loads of kids. You were always being handed a baby. You got used to it. John didn't have that, but he learned later. The four of us coming together, with

all these roots – there was a sensibility that we would want to do it right, in the family way. We had a common goal, a common wisdom, in life and in music.

Do you have a favorite album that you feel has been underrated or misunderstood? When you reissued "Ram" in 2012, it got raves, but when it first came out, in 1971, it took a beating.

That album popped into my mind. But I never give myself time to sit down and go through the list. Nearest I get to that is looking for stuff to do in the show, like "Love Me Do" – "We should try that one."

You are at a rare juncture – old enough to see some of your work kicked around, then praised decades later.

I do albums and, like a fool, I listen to what people say about them. A *New York Times* critic damned *Sgt. Pepper* when it came out. The terrible thing is it puts you off your own stuff. It plays into your self-doubts, even though you overcame those self-doubts to write that song. You're left with this smell of the music – a whiff of something not very good – and that sticks with you. But then you get rescued. A while ago, one of my nephews, Jay, said, "Ram's my all-time favorite album." I thought it

was dead and gone, stinking over there in the dung pit. So I listened to it. "Wow, I get what I was doing."

Were you disappointed that your last single, "Hope for the Future," was not a hit?

Yeah. It was something I thought would really do well. It didn't.

Have you had to change your expectations as to what constitutes a hit compared with what you knew in 1966?

I've given up trying to figure it out. You can't. Like this *Pure* album – I'll get rung up: "It's Number Three." "Wow, that's cool, man. What did it sell?" "15,000." I think inside, "It's a joke, man – 15,000 a day was not good then."

But that's the new world in record sales, unless you're Rihanna or Beyoncé. I'll put out my next album, but I won't think I'm gonna sell a lot. I'm putting it out because I have songs that I like. And I will do my best job. The scene has changed, but it doesn't disturb me, because I had the best of it – selling 100,000 a day on something like "Mull of Kintyre." I've had the joy of that. If I don't have it now, it's not just about me. All of my contemporaries, who are still pretty cool, don't have it, because things have moved on.

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Phil Lesh

The Grateful Dead bassist on growing up among the Beats, his favorite sci-fi, and having visions of Jerry

You were a teenager in Berkeley during the Beat era. What are your memories of that time?

In high school, we would go over to San Francisco and hang out at [the bookstore] City Lights and the Co-Existence Bagel Shop. We never met any of the great Beats. They were just in the air. The closest I ever came was a poetry reading in '64 or '65 with Lew Welch, Gary Snyder and four or five others. My favorite memory was Lew Welch's line in one of his poems. He was describing looking in the mirror in the morning: "I don't know who you are, but I'm going to shave you anyway."

Who were your heroes then?

[The composer] Charles Ives and John Coltrane. The music of Ives contains the world. It has marching bands, fireworks, bubbling streams – it sounds like the inside of your head when you're daydreaming. Coltrane was the realization that you could improvise in the moment and tap into the music of the spheres. I saw his classic quartet in 1962, with [guitarist] Wes Montgomery sitting in. That experience formed the approach of the Grateful Dead when I joined them.

Do you have heroes now?

No. It's not that we outgrow our heroes. We either live up to what they ask of us, or we don't.

What was your favorite book as a child?

I was a space nut. In elementary school, I checked out *Destination Moon*, by Robert A. Heinlein, about 3,000 times from the library. I've always loved sci-fi. *More Than Human*, by Theodore Sturgeon, is the one, in my mind, that helped define the Dead.

What music moves you the most these days?

I listen to a lot of Bach and string quartets. I've always seen the music we make [in Phil Lesh and Friends] as electric chamber music. Interestingly, I'm starting to do performances that don't involve drums, which frees you up in a certain way.

You have a club, Terrapin Station, in San Rafael, California. There's a regular event there on Sundays – Stories & Songs: Phil Lesh & the Camp Terrapin Family Band. What is that?

It's for really young kids. I read children's books and do songs: *The Cat in the Hat*, "Puff the Magic Dragon," *The Little Engine That Could*. I'm hoping that as the kids get older, I'll be able to start reading *The Hobbit* – in chapters, like a movie serial back in the day.

What was the best part of the Grateful Dead's success for you?

It was wildly successful for me until we took the break from touring [in 1975]. When we came back, it was never quite the same. Even though it was great and we played fantastic music, something was missing.

What was missing?

It's hard to pin down – a certain spirit. It would come back now and then, on some awesome evening, some particularly great performance. But that was even more frustrating, because it would disappear again for X number of shows, just disappear.

You started a family late in life. What did you learn in raising your two sons that might have helped you in the Dead?

When we had kids, they always went on the road with us. I made everybody book the tours around school. Or we took a tutor along. The family made me realize there was life beyond the Grateful Dead – it enabled me to put things in balance.

What do you do to relax?

I have new digs on the hill in Marin County. There is a feeling about the land, the spirit of the place, that is tranquil, renewing. I can walk out the door and go up the hill, right into open space on Bald Hill that extends all the way to the beach. I never knew how much I needed this.

Jerry Garcia would have turned 74 on August 1st. Do you have a favorite memory of him?

It's the three of us – me, Bob [Weir] and Jerry in the Los Trancos Woods near Palo Alto in the summer of 1965. We'd wander around – you can imagine the state we were in – and I ran with Bob into some gully. We'd hang out there, looking at the trees. We came back up the road, and there's Jerry scuttling across the field, kind of like a badger, a three-toed sloth, on all fours. He's scurrying across, and he's moving fast. Then he sees us, and he gets this sheepish grin on his face. And he flops on his back.

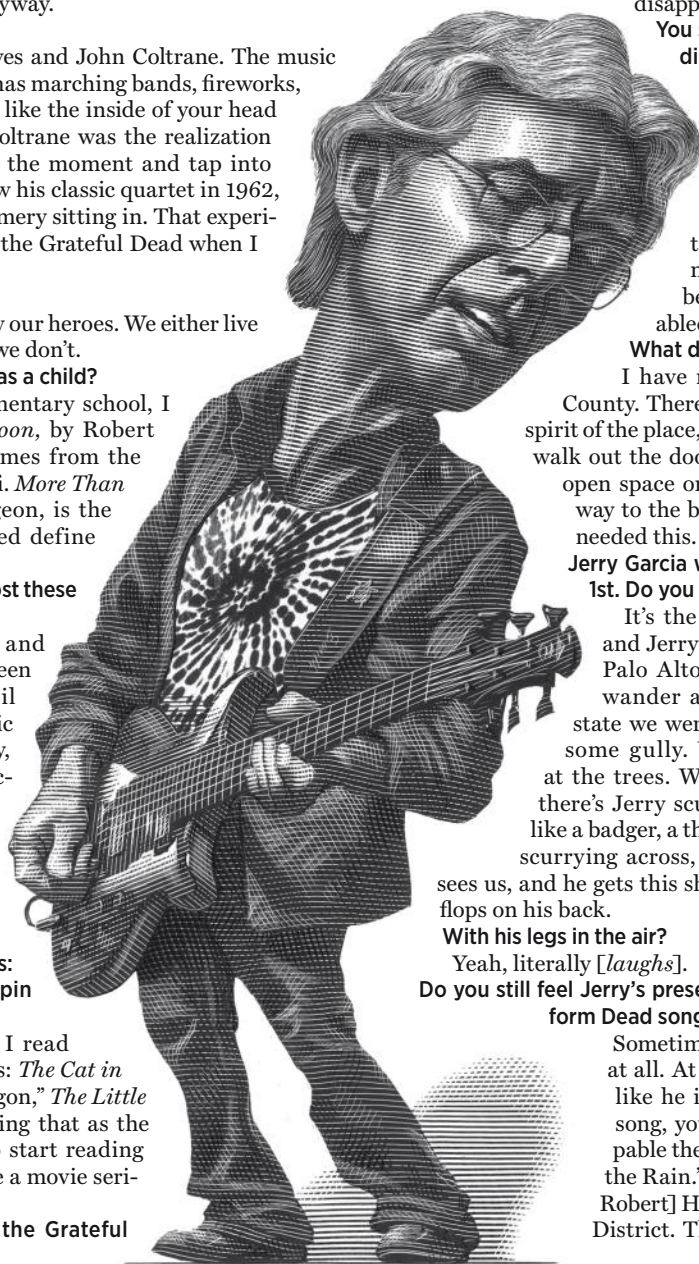
With his legs in the air?

Yeah, literally [*laughs*].

Do you still feel Jerry's presence in the music when you perform Dead songs?

Sometimes very intensely, sometimes not at all. At the same time, you have to feel like he is the song. When you're in the song, you're with Jerry. It was very palpable the other night. We did "Mission in the Rain." I actually saw him and [lyricist Robert] Hunter, walking along the Mission District. That was the image in my mind.

INTERVIEW BY DAVID FRICKE



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